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BALZAC ✣ DICKENS ✣ DOSTOEFFSKY

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VOLPONE (Adapted from Ben Jonson)

STEFAN ZWEIG

Master Builders

A TYPOLOGY OF THE SPIRIT

Translated from the German

by Eden and Cedar Paul

North Central College Library
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NEW YORK ❖ THE VIKING PRESS ❖ MCMXXXIX

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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ALTHOUGH the three trilogies in this volume were written during a period of twenty-five years, all were, from the very first, parts of a single plan. I was drawn to the attempt to make clear the generic characteristics of the poetic type by means of the contrasts and likenesses of each trinity of creative figures in the three books. The first series, *Three Masters* (*Drei Meister;* German publication 1920), was intended to depict, in the life and work of three writers of different nationality—Balzac, Dickens, and Dostoeffsky—the type of the world-portraying novelist; the third series, *Adepts in Self-Portraiture* (*Drei Dichter ihres Lebens;* German publication 1928), treated of the self-portraitists, the masters of autobiography, in the persons of Casanova, Stendhal, and Tolstoy. Between these two books came *The Struggle with the Daimon* (*Der Kampf mit dem Dämon;* German publication 1925), in which I sought to describe, in Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche—as opposed to Goethe, the genius of self-preservation—the type of the self-destructive poet whose "daimon" at once drags him aloft and thrusts him down into the inner abyss.

Of the three trilogies, *Three Masters* and *Adepts in Self-Portraiture* appeared in English shortly after their German publication. The third, *The Struggle with the Daimon*, was held back for extrinsic reasons and now appears in English for the first time. Thus is finally brought to a close a work which, I hope, will, through the very differences of its nine characters, communicate the inner unity of its purpose: to show the eternal struggle that every artist is obliged to wage against reality for his work's sake.

STEFAN ZWEIG

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PART ONE

Three Masters

BALZAC

DICKENS

DOSTOEFFSKY

TO

ROMAIN ROLLAND

IN GRATITUDE

FOR HIS LOYAL FRIENDSHIP

THROUGH BRIGHT AND GLOOMY DAYS

INTRODUCTION

The three essays comprising this section were penned at various times in the course of ten years. Yet though they were composed at fairly long intervals, it is in no fit of caprice on the part of the author that they are assembled under one cover. A conviction of their essential uniformity has prompted him to bring these three greatest novelists of the nineteenth century together; to show them as types which, for the very reason that they contrast each with the others, also complete one another in a way which makes them combine to round off our concept of the epic portrayers of the world, the writers of romances.

When I say that I consider Balzac, Dickens, and Dostoeffsky the supremely great novelists of the nineteenth century, it must not be thought that I am casting a slur on the achievements of Goethe, Gottfried Keller, Stendhal, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Thackeray, Victor Hugo, and many others. From the works of each of these distinguished men you may select a novel and tell me, with good reason, that it excels any single work of my chosen trio—or at any rate any single work by Balzac or Dickens. But this brings me to the distinction I wish to draw between the writer of one (perhaps even more than one) outstanding novel, and what I term a true novelist—an epic master, the creator of an almost unending series of pre-eminent romances. The novelist in this higher sense is endowed with encyclopedic genius, is a universal artist, who constructs a cosmos, peopling it with types of his own making, giving it laws of

gravitation that apply to it alone, and a starry firmament adorned with planets and constellations. Each figure, each happening, in such a world will be so impressed with the author's personality, that they not only become typical for him but for us likewise. Indeed, he impregnates characters and things so strongly with his personality, and makes them so amazingly alive, that we come to speak of individuals in the real world as "a Balzac figure," "a Dickens type," "a Dostoeffsky nature." These artists build up a law of life and a concept of life by means of the characters in their books, so that we get a picture of a united whole, and are given a vision of a new kind of world. My aim in the present study is to lay bare the hidden uniformity of these laws and character formations, and thus to portray "The Psychology of the Novelist." Indeed, the last five words might well have served as sub-title to this section.

Each of the novelists I have chosen has created his own sphere: Balzac, the world of society; Dickens, the world of the family; Dostoeffsky, the world of the One and of the All. A comparison of these spheres only serves to prove their differences. But it has not been my intention to put a valuation on the differences, or to emphasize the national element in the artist, whether in a spirit of sympathy or antipathy. Every great creator is a unity in himself, a unity with its own boundaries and its own specific gravity. And there is only one specific gravity possible within a single work, and no absolute criterion in the scales of justice.

I take it for granted that the reader is familiar with the writings of the three artists dealt with in this study. My essays are not meant as an introduction but as a sublimation, a condensation, an essence. They are concerned only with what I personally deem indispensable. I regret having to be so concise, more especially in the case of Dostoeffsky,

for here, as with Goethe, the proportions of the man are so vast that even the widest latitude of depiction proves inadequate to the task.

I should gladly have added to these great figures (one a Frenchman, one an Englishman, and one a Russian) the study of a representative German novelist, worthy of the name in the sense I have just explained. But I regret to say I have found none, either in our own time or in the past, who is entitled to take his place beside the present trio. Do I presume too much in the hope that *Three Masters* may help to evoke a fourth from the womb of the coming time—a German master novelist whose birth I thus greet from afar?

Salzburg, 1919.

I announce a life that shall be copious,
vehement, spiritual, bold. . . .
WALT WHITMAN

Balzac

1799–1850

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PLASTIC YEARS

Balzac was born at Tours in 1799. He was, therefore, a native of a bountiful province where Rabelais too had found a cheerful home. May 20, 1799; mark well the date! For in the autumn of that same year Napoleon (whom a world already disquieted by his exploits still called Bonaparte) returned from his Egyptian campaign, half victor and half fugitive. He had fought under foreign skies, the pyramids being the stony witnesses of his prowess; then, abandoning his grandiose schemes for Egypt's betterment, he turned back to the country of his adoption. Setting sail in a little vessel, he eluded Nelson's watchful eyes, and landed at Fréjus on October ninth. Very soon he was able to gather a handful of trusty followers; he cleared out the Directory and the Councils, and at one blow became the leading power in France. Thus, the year of Balzac's birth was likewise the year when the man who was to found the First Empire made a great stride forward on his path. The new century was no longer to speak of "le petit général"; the "Corsican adventurer" was to be forgotten; soon Bonaparte was to be known as Napoleon, the Emperor of the French. For fifteen years (the years of Balzac's boyhood) Napoleon's mighty hands were to hold half Europe in their grip, while his ambitious dreams embraced the world, from the west to the far east, in the orbit of his empire.

To a contemporary of Napoleon, and more especially to a man of Balzac's disposition, it could not be a matter of

indifference that the first sixteen years of his life should have coincided with those of the Consulate and the Empire, perhaps the most fantastical epoch in the world's history. Early experiences, and that strange thing we speak of as destiny, what are they but the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective, aspects of the same phenomenon? How could the momentous experiences of the time fail to influence a mind of Balzac's calibre? As he grew up, he learned that a man born in a remote isle of the Mediterranean had come to Paris as a youth—a man without friends or profession or status—and, finding that the reins of power had been dropped, had vaulted into the saddle, had seized them, and had ridden his steed on the curb. With naked hands, the unknown foreigner had conquered Paris, France, the world! The story of this adventurous career did not come to Balzac as an old wives' tale. It was the story of a man who lived and ruled; it was full of colour and throbbing with actuality. It permeated the boy's life; flooded his thirsty and receptive senses with kaleidoscopic pictures; peopled the virgin realm of his inner self with tremendous realities. We may well suppose that when Balzac learned to read fluently, it was through reading the Emperor's manifestoes—those proud, succinct communications which told with Roman simplicity the record of stupendous victories. Can we not see the child's stubby finger tracing the contours of France upon the map? Can we not follow the boy's eyes as the frontiers gradually enlarged, to include, at last, the greater part of Europe? Listen, is not this a fairy tale they are telling him? They say that Napoleon has crossed the Great St. Bernard with all his army; another day, he is over the Sierra Nevada; then he is heard of on the farther side of the Rhine, conquering Germany;

athwart the snows and into the heart of Russia; across the sea and fighting (by proxy, this time) at Gibraltar, where his ships are pounded to matchwood by the British guns. Only a short while since, some of these very soldiers were larking with the little fellow in the street, men whose faces were scarred by slashes from the Cossacks' barbaric swords; many a time he may have been wakened in the night by the clatter of the passing guns as they rumbled on their way to shatter the ice under the Russian cavalrymen at Austerlitz. All his youthful dreams and longings must have been concentred upon one name, one thought, one person: Napoleon.

Leading into the great park which runs from Paris away into the wide universe, is a huge triumphal arch; hereon the names of the conquered cities of half the world have been graven in the marble. What a vast sense of power and dominion this must have conveyed to the lad's impressionable mind! And what a terrible disappointment this same lad must have suffered on the day when foreign troops, music playing and flags flying, marched through the proud archway! Everything that happened in the outer world soaked into his heart as a fresh and vivid experience. Early in life he had to live through a mighty transvaluation of values, as much in the spiritual as in the material sphere. He saw assignats, whose value under the Republic had been frs. 100 or frs. 1000, thrown away as so much waste paper. The gold coins that passed through his hands were sometimes stamped with the late king's obese profile, at other times they bore the Jacobin cap of liberty, later the first consul's Roman effigy, anon Napoleon as emperor. He must soon have learned the purely relative nature of all values, living as he did in an epoch of such amazing change,

an epoch during which morals, money, land, laws, and frontiers, everything that for centuries had been dammed back behind solid masonry, suddenly dried up or, breaking through the floodgates, inundated the whole of life. He lived in a veritable whirlpool; and when, giddy and dazed, he looked around in search of some symbol, some constellation, to guide him amid the circling waves, his gaze always encountered this one figure, this epitome of activity, from whom all the shattering and inspiring events emanated.

One day he even saw Napoleon. It was on the occasion of a parade when the great man was surrounded by the creatures he had raised to prominence: Rustan, the Mameluke; Joseph, the brother into whose hands he had committed the destinies of Spain; Murat, to whom he had given Sicily; Bernadotte, the traitor; all those for whom he had provided crowns and had conquered kingdoms, whom he had lifted out of the obscurity and nothingness of their past into the radiant glory of his present. In one short second, an image had been stamped on the boy's retina, a figure more heroic than any that had hitherto filled the annals of history. The lad had seen the world conqueror! And to a boy, the sight of a great conqueror is surely father to the dream of becoming one himself. True, there were two other world conquerors alive in the opening years of the nineteenth century: one of them dwelt at Königsberg, the philosopher whose comprehensive insight had helped to simplify the confusions of the universe; and the other at Weimar, the writer whose thought was mastering the world as effectively as Napoleon had mastered it with his armies. But such conquests as these were in a

remote sphere as yet, so far as young Balzac was concerned. His discontent with a mere fragment, his craving for the whole, his ambition for all-embracing possession—these he owed to the example of Napoleon.

CHOICE OF PROFESSION

Balzac's will to world conquest did not at once find a suitable field of operations. He could not make up his mind on the choice of profession. Had he been born two years earlier, he would automatically have entered the Napoleonic armies as soon as he reached his eighteenth year; he might then have fought at Waterloo and faced the fire of the British squares. But history does not recapitulate. Following the storms of the Napoleonic epoch came a period of quiet, warm, summer days. Under Louis XVIII, the sword was no more than an ornament; the soldier, a courtling; the politician, an orator or the turner of pretty phrases. Public life ran to seed, the foamy torrent of events quieted down to the calm of a mill-pond. The world was no longer to be conquered by feats of arms. Napoleon, the exemplar of the few, had become the bugbear of the many. Art remained. Balzac began to write.

But not like all the others, in order to make money, to amuse people, to fill a shelf with books, to be the talk of the boulevards. He has no desire to earn the field-marshal's baton of literature: what he has set his heart on is to obtain the imperial throne itself. An attic is the scene of his first literary exploits. As if to test his powers, he writes, at the outset, under an assumed name. War has not yet been declared; these are but manœuvres, preliminary skirmishes, not yet a battle. Discontented with the result, disillusioned by his lack of success, he flings his work aside, and for three

or four years tries his luck at other trades, becomes a lawyer's clerk, looks around him, observing, enjoying what he sees, penetrating beneath the surface of things and events. Then he starts anew. This time he focuses his energies on the attainment of the goal; with a gargantuan avidity he determines to bring the whole world into the compass of his books. Despising the detail, the isolated phenomenon, the separate instance, he resolves to catch the mysterious complexity of the primal instincts in his embrace, to filter from the brew of occurrences the simple elements, to find harmony in the bustle and the noise, to press the world into his retort and to distil from the overplus of life the pure essence, to create everything anew "en raccourci," and, once having got all into his power, to animate this Balzacian cosmos with the breath of his own genius and to fashion it with his own hands. Nothing of life's multiformity is to go astray; yet, in order to enfold the infinite within finite forms, in order to bring the almost unattainable within the range of the humanly possible, he must have recourse to "compression." He devotes himself heart and soul to the process of sifting phenomena, so that everything irrelevant may be excluded. Having thus extracted the best and finest ingredients, he proceeds to knead them, to mould them with his ardent fingers, until gradually there emerges a co-ordinated system capable of being observed and analysed. In fact, he is a literary Linnæus, collecting the myriads of plants into a compact classification; or, like a chemist, analysing numberless compounds into their elements. Such is now the goal of his desires.

THE HUMAN COMEDY

Balzac seeks to simplify the world in order to subdue it to his dominion, and to confine it within the walls of his magnificent prison-house, *La Comédie Humaine*. Thanks to this process of distillation, his characters become types, are always an abridged edition of a plurality from which an implacable artist has shorn everything superfluous or immaterial. Straightforward passion is the motive force, the unmixed type is the actor, an unpretentious environment is the setting, for *La comédie humaine*. He concentrates, inasmuch as he adapts the centralized administrative system to literary ends. Like Napoleon, he confines the world within the frontiers of France, and makes Paris the centre of the universe. Within this circle, again, in Paris itself, he draws many circles; one around the nobility, another around the clergy; others around manual workers, poets, artists, men of science, and so on. Fifty aristocratic salons are potted into one—the salon over which the Princesse de Cadignan reigns as presiding genius. A hundred different bankers are condensed to form Baron de Nucingen; an infinity of usurers go to the making of Gobseck; as many physicians, to that of Horace Bianchon. All these people live at closer quarters in his novels than they would in real life, they come more frequently into contact one with the other, combat one another more vehemently. Where in real life we should find a thousand variants, in his novels we must be content with one sample. He does

not recognize mixed types. His world is poorer than the actual world; but it is more intense. For his characters are distillates; the passions he depicts are pure elements; his tragedies are condensations.

Like Napoleon, he begins by conquering Paris. Then he sets about conquering France, province by province. Every department sends its representative, as it were, to Balzac's parliament. Then, again like a triumphant Consul Bonaparte, he flings his armies across all frontiers into foreign lands. His people go off to the fjords of Norway, or to the scorching tablelands of Spain; they pitch their tents beneath the torrid skies of Egypt, or are in the retreating army forcing a passage across the frozen waters of the Beresina. His urge to world conquest takes him everywhere, just as the same impulse had made his exemplar range far and wide. And, just as Napoleon, taking his ease in the lull between two campaigns, sets to work composing the Code civile, so Balzac, resting for a moment after his conquests in the *Comédie humaine,* produces a Code morale of love and marriage, traces the smiling and merry arabesque of *Les cent contes drolatiques.*

His wanderings take him into the dwellings where misery abides, into peasant hovels; thence he strolls into the mansions of the mighty at Saint-Germain, and penetrates into the private apartments of Napoleon himself. Wherever he goes, he breaks down the fourth wall, and therewith lays bare the secrets within the closed chamber. He rests among the soldiers under canvas in Brittany; he takes his chances on the stock exchange; peeps behind the scenes at the theatres; pries into the labours of savants. His wizard's eye pierces into every nook and cranny. His army is composed of two or three thousand individuals, whom

he has conjured out of the earth. Naked they are, when summoned from the void: but their creator throws a few garments over them; gives them title and wealth, as Napoleon did in the case of his marshals. If his whim suggests, he deprives them of all he has bestowed; he plays with them, jostles them one against the other. Events crowd upon us in these books; we view innumerable landscapes which serve as background. The conquest of the world effected in *La comédie humaine* is just as unique in the history of literature as Napoleon's conquests in the history of modern times; Balzac seems to grasp the whole of life in his two hands. As a boy he dreamed of conquering the world, and nothing is more potent than an early resolve which realizes itself in action. The sentence he wrote under a picture of Napoleon was no idle boast in his case: "Ce qu'il n'a pu achever par l'épée je l'accomplirai par la plume."

His heroes resemble their progenitor, for they are all inspired with the idea of world conquest. A centripetal force drags them away from provincial life into Paris. The great town is their battlefield. The lure of the metropolis has brought this army thither; virgin souls, untested as yet, full of raw energies for which they seek an outlet. Here, needy but ambitious, they jostle one another, destroy one another, clamber up the social ladder, tumble back again into oblivion. For none is there a place prepared. Each must win his own laurels. Balzac was the first to make it clear that the fight within the circle of civilized social life is no less strenuous than that which takes place upon the battlefield. "My bourgeois novels are more tragical than your tragic dramas," he once exclaimed to the romanticists.

The first lesson Balzac's young people have to learn is ruthlessness. They know that their numbers are excessive, and that they must therefore gobble one another up "like spiders in a pot," as Vautrin observes. The weapon with which their youth has armed them must be tested in the fires of experience; and it is only those who survive the ordeal who are "right." From all the thirty-two points of the compass they come, like the "sansculottes of the Grand' Armée"; they kick their shoes out on the march to Paris; the dust of the highway clings to their clothes; their throats are parched with a thirst for enjoyment. They look around them on reaching this new and magical sphere of elegance

and wealth and might; they feel they are indeed poorly equipped to set about conquering these palaces, these women, these powers. If they are to make the most of their talents, they must pass them again through the fires, must toughen their youthful energies, must convert common sense into cunning, beauty into vice, boldness into subtlety. Balzac's heroes, in their avidity, aim at possessing the All; no less will suffice their greed. Like adventures happen to every one of them. A tilbury dashes by, sprinkling them with mud; the driver cracks his whip; in the carriage sits a fair lady, jewels asparkle in her hair. A glance is exchanged; the dame is seductively beautiful, a symbol of pleasure. Instantly the identical thought flashes through the brain of all Balzac's heroes: Mine! Mine the woman, the carriage, the domestics, the wealth, Paris, the world! Napoleon's example, showing that (even for the least of men) power is a marketable commodity, has corrupted them. They are no longer content as were their provincial fathers of old to fight for a vineyard, a prefecture, a heritage; what they are after is nothing more than a symbol, it is true, for they strive to gain power, to rise into the august circles where the sun of kingship shines and where streams of money flow freely. Inspired with such ambitious designs, they become those pushing individuals whom Balzac endows with stronger muscles, wilder eloquence, more energetic impulses, and a more rapid and eventful career, than is granted to most mortals. They are beings whose dreams realize themselves in action; they are poets who poetize with the very substance of life. Two methods of approach are available: the man of genius breaks trail for himself; the others make use of the beaten road. If one wishes to attain to power one must devise means of one's

own to get there; failing this, one must follow the trail, must learn the methods approved of by society. If any one stands between you and your goal you must smite him ruthlessly to earth, or poison him: such is Vautrin's advice, Vautrin the anarchist, the figure Balzac draws on such a grand scale.

In the Latin Quarter, where Balzac himself started life as a writer, his heroes meet. Here we encounter those archetypes of social life: Desplein, the medical student; Rastignac, the arrivist; Louis Lambert, the philosopher; Bridau, the painter; Rubempré, the journalist; a "cénacle" of young men, inchoate elements, rudimentary characters, and yet—the whole of life, grouped round the dining-table in that fabulous "Maison Vauquer." But these people become metamorphosed in the great retort of life; they lose their true essence when the container is boiled in the heat of the passions, when it is suffered to cool again in the icy atmosphere of disappointment, when it is subjected to the manifold activities of society—to mechanical friction, magnetic attraction, chemical disintegration, molecular decomposition. Paris, the acid of acids, dissolves them, eats them up, separates them, allows them to disappear; or, she may crystallize them, harden them, and petrify them. All the activities of change, colouring, and unification, are brought to completion in them; and out of the combined elements new complexes arise. Thus, ten years later, the survivors, those who have been transformed in the crucibles, meet upon the mountain tops of life, and greet one another with augur smiles: Desplein, the celebrated physician; Rastignac, the minister of State; Bridau, the famous painter; whereas Louis Lambert and Rubempré have been crushed beneath the wheels of fate.

Balzac made good use of his knowledge of chemistry, and of the work of his beloved authors Cuvier and Lavoisier. The complicated process of action and reaction, of affinities, of attraction and repulsion, of separation and systematization, of disintegration and crystallization, this atomistic simplification of combinations, seemed to him to give a better picture of social cohesion than any other. The idea—which he christened "Lamarckism," and which Taine was later to petrify into a formula—that every multiplicity reacts upon a unity with no less vigour than does a unity upon a multiplicity, that each individual is a product of climate, of the society in which he is reared, of customs, of chance, of all that fate has brought his way, that each individual absorbs the atmosphere by which he is surrounded as he grows to adulthood and in his turn radiates an atmosphere which others will absorb; this universal influence of the world within and the world without upon the formation of character, became an axiom with Balzac. Everything flows into everything else; all forces are mobile, and not one of them is free—such was his view.

Unrestricted relativism makes continuity impossible, even the continuity of character. Balzac always allows the figures in his books to form themselves upon events. They are modelled by the hand of fate as clay is moulded by the potter. Their very names embody a transformative process, and are nowise unified. The Baron de Rastignac, a peer of France, marches through twenty of the books. One fondly imagines one knows him, that one can recognize the ruthless arrivist as he saunters along the street, or dominates a social gathering, or appears in a newspaper; that one identifies this prototype of the brutal, pitiless striver amid the Parisian world of fashion; that one is acquainted with the

creature who slips like an eel through the clutches of the law, and who incorporates the morality of a corrupt society. Yet in one of the books we are presented with another Rastignac, a poor young man of aristocratic birth, whom his parents have sent to Paris with little money but high hopes, a gentle, quiet, modest, sentimental creature. We are shown how he comes to be in the Maison Vauquer, in that witch's cauldron of contending characters.

Here, with one of those marvellous condensations in which Balzac excels, he displays the whole gamut of temperaments and characters within the four walls of a modest dwelling. The young nobleman witnesses a tragedy, like that of King Lear, in the person of le Père Goriot; sees how the tinsel princess of the Faubourg Saint-Germain robs her father of everything he once possessed; contemplates the vileness of society and its culmination in catastrophe. And when, in the end, he follows the coffin of the all too kindly old man to the grave, a lonely mourner, he is temporarily filled with scorn for Paris. He sees the town as a dirty yellow and malignant sore spread out at the foot of the hill on which is the cemetery of Père Lachaise. At that moment he is informed with all the knowledge of life, and he hears the voice of Vautrin whispering in his ear: You have to use men as post-horses, harnessing them to your chariot and whipping them forward on their way, to let them founder at the winning post. At that minute the gentle youth is transformed into the Baron de Rastignac of the other books, the relentless, ruthless hustler, the pair de France.

All Balzac's heroes experience such a crisis on their march through life. Every one of them becomes a soldier in the war of all against all, pressing eagerly forward over

the bodies of the slain. Each has to cross the Rubicon, each has to experience his Waterloo. Balzac shows us that the same fights take place no matter where we are, whether in palaces or in huts or in taverns; that under the garments of priests, doctors, soldiers, lawyers, the same impulses rage. This is well known to Vautrin, who plays so many parts in Balzac's works, and who is nevertheless always the same, always consciously the same. Beneath the smooth surface of modern life, the old struggles persist. Beneath the semblance of equality, the envious longing for predominance is still at work. Since no place is now reserved as of old for the king, the nobility, and the priesthood, since all have a right to everything, everyone strives with tenfold vigour to capture the position which his sense of self-importance assigns to him. The curtailing of possibilities stimulates the craving to make the most of those that remain.

It is precisely this murderous and suicidal warring of energies which stimulates Balzac to the exercise of his art. To depict energy, striving towards a goal, as the expression of a conscious and vital will, not in its effect but in its essence—such is the passion that possesses him. So long as this energy is intensive, he cares little or not at all whether it be good or bad, whether it be wasted energy or energy turned to good account. Intensity of purpose, will, these are everything, because they are the inherent qualities of man: success and fame are nothing, for they are subject to chance. The petty thief who, hungry and full of fear, sneaks a loaf of bread from the baker's, is merely a bore; the thief on the large scale, the professional miscreant, who steals not because he is in want, but because he is filled with the

desire to grapple everything to himself, such a one cuts a grand figure.

In Balzac's view, to measure the actual effects is the duty of the historian; to exhibit the causes, and to depict intensity, fall to the lot of the imaginative writer. Power becomes tragical only if it does not reach the goal. Balzac portrays the "héros oubliés," since every epoch has not one Napoleon alone, has not only the Napoleon of the historians, the man who conquered the world between the years 1796 and 1815, but four or five others whose deeds are not inscribed upon the pages of history. One, whose name was Desaix, may have fallen at Marengo; another may have been sent to Upper Egypt by the real Napoleon, sent far away from the actual happenings of the day; a third may have passed through the greatest of all tragedies, may have been a Napoleon who never reached a battlefield but was condemned to live out his life in some hidden corner of a remote province. Yet such men as these did not expend less energy than Napoleon, even though they were forced to expend it on minor issues.

Balzac shows us women who by their devotion and their beauty would have become celebrities under the Roi Soleil, whose names would have been as bright with glory as that of Pompadour or of Diane de Poitiers; he talks of poets whose talents run to seed because the times are unfavourable to their development, whom fame has passed by unnoticed, and whom the poets of a later day must crown with laurels. He knows that every second of life witnesses a tremendous wastage of energy. He knows that Eugénie Grandet, the sentimental country lass, at the moment when she tremblingly gives the purse of money to her cousin

before the very eyes of her avaricious father, is no less heroic than Jeanne d'Arc whose effigy in marble is to be found in wellnigh every marketplace of France. Success cannot blind the biographer of a thousand careers, cannot deceive one who has analysed all the ingredients of the social compost.

Balzac's incorruptible eyes, concentrated upon the detection of energy, perceive amid the whirligig of actualities only that which is living tension. In the stampede on the banks of the Beresina, for instance, when Napoleon's disrupted army is struggling to cross the river, when the despair and the villainy and the heroism of a hundred similar scenes are compressed into a second, he selects, as the truly great heroes of the occasion, the forty sappers, whose names no one can tell, who for three days together stand breast-deep in the numbing water and amid the drifting ice, in order to bridge the current by which half of the Grand Army is subsequently swept to destruction. He knows that behind the curtained windows of Parisian houses tragedies occur every minute, catastrophes which are no less overwhelming than Juliet's suicide, Wallenstein's murder, or Lear's madness and despair. Always he is ready to reiterate his own words: "My bourgeois novels are more tragical than your tragic dramas!" For his romances are not concerned with mere externals. Vautrin, for all that he is dressed like an ordinary citizen of the modern world, is no less impressive a figure than Quasimodo, the quaintly clad bellringer in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame;* nor are the arid, rocky landscapes of the soul, the undergrowth of passion and greed which cumber the breast of this supreme arrivist, less terrible than the awful abysses in the mind of Han d'Islande.

Balzac does not depend upon drapery for his effects, any more than he has recourse to the exotic or to the remote annals of history for his settings. What he relies upon is the super-dimensional, the enhanced intensity of an emotion unified through singleness of purpose. He realizes that a feeling does not become important until it can remain unimpaired, in its full force; that a man is great only in so far as he concentrates on a goal, does not fritter away his energies on incidental desires, but allows his ruling passion to imbibe the juices of all the other emotions, growing strong through robbery and a fierce disregard of conflicting claims—just as a branch will become more robust if the gardener lops off subsidiary branches.

It is such monomaniacs of passion whom Balzac has portrayed; persons who conceive of the world under the aspect of one single symbol, who are constant to one aim amid the great whirl.

The basic axiom of his theory of energetics is a kind of mechanics of the passions: the belief that every life expends an equal sum of energy, no matter upon what illusions it dissipates the volitional appetite; no matter whether it uses them up slowly in the course of a thousand excitements, or cherishes them thriftily for a time, in order to lavish them on one headlong ecstasy; no matter whether the fire of life burns quietly and steadily, or flames up in an explosion. He who lives quicker does not live a shorter time, any more than one who lives in harmony with himself forgoes the multiplicity of experience. For a work which aims at the depiction of types, at the presentation of none but pure elements, monomaniacs are alone of importance. The feeble among mankind are of no interest to our author. He cares only for people who cling to their life illusion with

every nerve and muscle of their bodies; who concentrate all their thoughts upon it, whether that illusion be love or art, avarice or self-sacrifice, courage or indolence, politics or friendship. Whatever the symbol may be, they must embrace it wholeheartedly.

These "hommes à passion," these fanatical believers in a religion of their own creation, glance neither to right nor to left. They talk in many tongues to one another, but do not understand one another's language. If a woman, the most beautiful in the world, offers her charms to a man who has a craze not for women but for bibelots, he will ignore her advances; a lover may have a chance of a fine career, but he will not for that reason turn aside from the pursuit of love; a miser may be presented with treasure other than money, yet he will ignore it and refuse to take his eyes off the contemplation of his hoard. Once he allows himself to be seduced from his beloved passion, he is lost. Muscles waste if they are not used, sinews that have not been stretched for years become rigid, and he who has for long been a virtuoso of one particular passion, an athlete in the exercise of one particular emotion, is a weakling and a bungler in any other province of emotional activity. A feeling that is pushed to the point of monomania comes to dominate all the other feelings, depriving them of nutriment so that they perish; the dominant emotion flourishes at the expense of the others. All the gradations and accidents of love—jealousy and sadness, exhaustion and ecstasy—are reflected in the miser's mania for hoarding, in the collector's mania for collecting; absolute perfection incorporates the sum-total of emotional possibilities. The emotions proper to all the neglected possibilities are concentrated in one leading passion.

Such is the theme of Balzac's great tragedies. The money-maker Nucingen, having amassed millions, excelling all the bankers of the empire in sagacity, becomes a silly child in the hands of a strumpet; the poet who plunges into journalism is ground to powder between the upper and the nether millstones. A particular vision of the world (a symbol, no more) is jealous as was Jehovah of old, who said: "Thou shalt have none other Gods before me!" And among the passions there are none of greater and none of lesser importance; one does not take precedence over the others, any more than there exists a hierarchy among landscapes and dreams. None are too lowly. "Why should not stupidity be the theme of a tragedy?" Balzac asks. "Why should not shame, anxiety, and boredom be fitting subjects?" These, too, are motive forces, impulsive powers; these, too, are significant if they be but sufficiently intense. Even the sorriest trend of life has a vivacity and a beauty of its own as soon as it becomes unified and intensified to enable a mortal to challenge the limits imposed by fate.

These archetypal forces, or, rather, these thousand protean forms of the one and only archetypal energy, must be wrenched from the human breast, scourged by the emotions, inebriated by the elixirs of hate and of love; Balzac wishes to see them rave in their intoxication, dash themselves upon the rocks of chance; he jostles them together and rends them asunder; sets up a system of communications, bridges the chasm between one dream and another, between the miser and the collector, between the seeker after fame and the amatory enthusiast; again and again he reshapes the parallelogram of forces; in every destiny he scans the formidable abyss between wave hollow

and wave crest; he gazes at these tumultuous lives as eagerly as Gobseck, the usurer, stared at Countess Restand's diamonds. If the fire should seem to be dying down, he fans the flames into a blaze; he goads on his characters as if he were a slave-driver and they were slaves, never permits them to rest, trundles them about hither and thither—as Napoleon hustled his soldiers, marching them from Austria into La Vendée; shipping them overseas to Egypt; sending them to Rome, through the Brandenburg Gate, or up to the Alhambra; haling them from victory to defeat over the steppes of Russia to Moscow, and leaving half of them to die upon the road, mowed down by the shrapnel of the enemy or bitten to death by frost and snow. Thus Balzac cuts the world out into figurines, paints suitable scenery, and then pulls the strings and makes the marionettes play the parts he has assigned to them. To accomplish all this is his own ruling passion!

THE ARCH-MONOMANIAC

For Balzac was himself one of those monomaniacs he delighted to portray! Discouraged by an unresponsive world which did not appreciate his first efforts in the field of literature, he withdrew into himself and created a symbolic world. This world was to belong to him, to be governed by him, to cease when he himself ceased. Reality rushed past him, and he never stirred a finger to arrest its flight and grasp it. He locked himself into his room, sat glued to his chair before his writing-table, lived among the characters he created, like Elie Magus, the collector, among his pictures. From the time he was twenty-five, reality interested him merely in so far as it provided fuel to set the wheels of his own world in motion. He almost deliberately allowed the life without to slip by unheeded, so great was his dread that a contact between the two worlds, his own and the real one, might be fraught with pain. At eight o'clock he would go to bed, weary with his day's work, would sleep for four hours, and get someone to rouse him at midnight. Then, while Paris, the noisy outer world, closed its glowing eyes in sleep, when darkness fell upon the bustling streets, his own world would awaken. He would build it alongside the other world, using the latter's disintegrated elements for the work of construction. Stimulating his tired brain with cup after cup of black coffee, he would enjoy feverish ecstasy. Thus he would toil for ten, twelve, and, at times, for eighteen hours, till something recalled him

to the world of reality. At these moments of awakening, his face must surely have borne the expression which the sculptor has given him. In Rodin's statue, we see him looking as if he had incontinently been wrenched from out the highest heaven, and abruptly deposited in a long-forgotten reality; it is an expression of alarm, at once exalted and horrified; he seems almost to be in the act of screaming; his hand is pulling his cloak over his shivering shoulders; his face looks as if he had been startled from slumber, like a sleepwalker whom someone has rudely awakened by shouting his name.

No other artist succeeds in losing himself in his work as perfectly as Balzac, none has a more confident belief in his own dream, none allows hallucination to carry him so near to the boundary of self-deception. He sometimes found it almost impossible to curb his excitement once the machinery had been set in motion; image and reality seemed to him equally concrete; and he could not always draw a sharp line between his inner world and the world outside. A book has been filled with anecdotes showing how fervent was his belief in the existence of his characters, a book that is comical and at times a little gruesome. A friend comes to pay a call. Balzac rushes up to him, crying: "Just fancy, the poor thing has killed herself!" The look of horror on his visitor's face reminds him that the person of whom he speaks, Eugénie Grandet, exists nowhere but in his own fancy. Perhaps the only thing which differentiates those vivid and lasting hallucinations from the hallucinations of a madman is that Balzac's imaginary figures were subject to the same causal determinisms as those that prevail in the domain of objective reality. His characters seem, indeed, to have knocked at the door of his study, and to

have passed from the outer world into the world of his books.

But his absorption in his work was tantamount to monomania in its persistence, its intensity, and its concentration. His industry was a veritable fever, an intoxication, a delirium. It resembled a magic potion which he drank that he might forget his hunger for life. He had all the makings of the spendthrift and the "grand viveur," and he himself admits that his orgies of work partook of the nature of sensual enjoyment. For, like the monomaniacs in his books, a man of such strong passions as Balzac could renounce their gratification only through finding a substitute for them. He could afford to miss all the condiments of life, such as love, ambition, wealth, travel, fame, and victory, because in his creative works he enjoyed these sensations vicariously, intensified to a sevenfold degree. His senses were like children; they could not distinguish true from false, dream from reality. All they wanted was to be fed; and they were indifferent as to whether the food provided was actual experience or the stuff that dreams are made of.

Throughout life, Balzac cheated his senses of their due. He satisfied their hunger with no more than the aroma of the viands. His own experience consisted of a passionate participation in the pleasures of the characters he created. For he himself threw the ten louis d'or on to the gaming-table, he himself stood trembling as the roulette wheel turned, he himself it was who with feverish fingers clutched the winnings; it was he himself who had a wonderful theatrical success, who stormed the heights with his brigade, who convulsed the stock market with his machinations. All the delights or sorrows he ascribed to his creatures belonged to him, compensating him for the barrenness of

personal experience. He toyed with these beings as Gobseck the usurer toyed with the poor, hopeless wretches who came to borrow money, playing them like fish at the end of his line, judicially contemplating their joy or sorrow as the more or less talented display of an actor. Balzac is speaking for himself when Gobseck says: "Do you fancy that it is a small matter, to delve into the secret places of a man's heart, to penetrate so deep that at last it stands naked before you?"

He is the wizard of the will, absorbing all foreign matter into himself, making it his own, transforming dreams into living reality. We are told that in youth, when all he had for dinner in his garret was a loaf of bread, he was wont to draw a circle in chalk on his table to represent a plate; within the circle he would write the name of some favourite dish, and then—so great was the power of his creative imagination—he could taste the succulent victuals and thus help down the insipid morsel. Just as, in this case, he fancied he could actually savour the dainty meats, so, in the course of writing his books he was able, in fancy, to relish all the delights of life; he could cheat himself into believing that he was rich instead of poor, and that he could be as extravagant as his puppets if such happened to be his pleasure. He who was always crushed by debts and persecuted by creditors, must have experienced a genuinely sensuous delight when he wrote such words as, "an income of a hundred thousand francs a year." It was he himself who spent glorious hours contemplating Elie Magus's collection of pictures, he who in the person of Goriot loved the two graceless daughters, he who with Seraphitus explored the fjords of Norway, he who as Rubempré revelled in the admiring glance of ladies; it was for his own delectation that he lavished pleasure upon these people, that he brewed philtres of pleasure or of pain for them out of the bright herbs and the dark with which the earth abounds.

It seems to me that no writer has ever participated so fully as he in his characters' joys and sorrows. More especially are we aware of this self-hypnotization in those places where he is describing the wonder-working power of riches such as he would gladly have had at his own command. This is his predominant passion, this ebb and flux of numbers, this winning and losing of vast sums, this tossing of capital from hand to hand, this swelling of bank balances and catastrophic crashing of values. He suddenly overwhelms beggars with an avalanche of wealth, or allows millions to slip through nerveless fingers. He loves depicting the palaces of the faubourgs, and the magic power of money. The words "millions" and "milliards" are perpetually recurring in his pages. Voluptuously, like odalisques awaiting the master's choice, the costly furniture and the exquisite curios are spread out in the rooms for us to admire. We can trace this fever even in his manuscripts. To begin with the lines are carefully penned, in a charming, well-formed script; anon, like the veins of the choleric, they swell, become tortuous, are overheated. Often, the pages bear splashes of coffee. One can almost fancy one hears the scream of the overdriven machinery, sees the convulsive spasm of the fanatical creator, witnesses the greed of the man who wishes to possess all. Even his proof-correction savours of the ferocious. Life a fever-racked man tearing open his wound, he often dislocates the whole structure of his creation in order to transfuse it with fresh and invigorating blood.

Such strenuous application to work would be incomprehensible were it not that we know it was an outlet for the author's pent-up passions, a method of expression for an ascetic who had renounced all other forms of gratification,

a vent for one who saw in art the only possibility for the discharge of his tensions. Once or twice, indeed, he tried other means. He made a venture in practical life, butted into commercial activities he knew absolutely nothing about, founded a printing establishment. But none of these undertakings prospered. He who in his books showed so much perspicacity, who knew all the tricks of the stock exchange, all the intricacies of large or small business deals, all the wiles of the usurers; he who had ordered the lives of hundreds of individuals in his novels, had helped them to build up their fortunes, who had made Grandet, Popinot, Crevel, Goriot, Bridau, Nucingen, Wehrbrust, and Gobseck wealthy men; he who, where the characters in his books were concerned, could reckon things at their true value, was himself brought to financial ruin, so that nothing remained to him but a burden of debt which he had to carry about with him all the remaining years of his life. Compelled by financial stress to toil unremittingly, a helot of the pen, he succumbed at last to the apoplectic stroke which released him. In its jealousy, the forsaken passion (the only one he ever surrendered himself to), his art, wreaked terrible vengeance upon him. Even love, which for most of us is a wonderful dream superimposed upon actual experience, was for him no more than something he constructed out of dream material. Madame Hanska, the Polish lady who ultimately became his wife, "l'étrangère," the recipient of those famous letters, was passionately loved by him ere he had ever looked into her eyes, while she was still an incorporeal being, "a golden-eyed girl," a Delphine or an Eugénie Grandet. Everything which takes a genuine literary artist away from his work of creation, from his world of fantasy, must be looked upon as a deviation from

his prescribed road through life. "L'homme de lettres doit s'abstenir des femmes, elles font perdre son temps, on doit se borner à leur écrire, cela forme le style," he once said to Théophile Gautier. As a matter of fact, he never really loved Madame Hanska herself, but was in love with his love for her; he did not care for the situations which arose through outward circumstances, but only for those he created for himself from his own brain. So long did he satisfy his hunger for reality with illusions, so long did he play with imaginative pictures and costumes, that in the end he came to believe in his own immaterial passions. He indulged this lust for creation without pause; nor did he cease fanning the flames of inspiration till the day of his death. With every new book he put his hand to, he curtailed the scene of his outward activities; his life shrank, like the wild ass's skin in his symbolical novel; he succumbed to his monomania, just as a gambler does to the lure of the cards, the toper to wine, the hashish dreamer to the fateful pipe, the voluptuary to women. And the too complete gratification of his wishes was, in the end, his undoing.

INDOMITABLE WILL

It was only natural that a man of such amazing will power should be a law unto himself; for an understanding of his own wizardry enabled him to comprehend the mystery of life ambushed within his own magical endowments. Was he not constantly clothing his dreams with so great a vitality, and endowing them with such a colossal capacity for vibrant emotion, that they became no less creatures of blood and bone than reality itself? A man whose creative will was of such a nature as Balzac's, could not be expected to have any specific philosophy of life; at all events he disclosed no characteristically personal outlook. Maybe this was because of his innate mutability of temperament, his power to assume, like Proteus, many different shapes, to slip himself into the bodies of a thousand creations of his brain, to lose himself in the labyrinth of their lives, to become, as occasion demanded, an optimist, an altruist, a pessimist, or a relativist.

He passes no judgment on the morality of his characters. Balzac seems content to "épouser les opinions des autres"; he spontaneously takes up others' opinions, but never identifies himself with them for long at a time. He is trapped for a while inside the body cavity of his characters, and participates temporarily in their passions and vices. The only thing perdurable about him is his indomitable will. This it is which, like the words "open sesame," magically gains him access into his creatures' hearts, so that he can explore

their catacombs and emerge again laden with spoils garnered among their emotions. He must have ascribed to the will an especially potent ability to pass from the realm of the spiritual into that of the material. Indeed, this almost amounted to a vital principle and a universal law, so far as he was concerned. The will, this imponderable medium which, radiating from a Napoleon, is capable of shaking the world, overthrowing empires, setting up kings, giving an unforeseen twist to innumerable destinies—this immaterial vibration of a spiritual factor—must, he knew, manifest itself in material reality, must model the physiognomy, and pervade the corporeal matter of the entire body. For, if a fugitive emotion is capable of finding expression on a man's countenance, beautifying the plainest features and imparting character to them, how much more effectively must a persistent will, and enduring passion, set a stamp upon the face.

For Balzac, indeed, a face was a stone tablet whereon the life-will had placed its sign manual. And, just as geologists are able to tell the story of a whole epoch by studying the lesson of the rocks and the fossils to be found therein, so, Balzac contended, should an imaginative writer be able, by studying faces, to decipher the character and the inner possibilities of men. The charm he found in the art of reading physiognomies led him greatly to appreciate Gall's work in this field; his topographical studies of the capacities residing in the brain led him to the reading of Lavater's books. Lavater, likewise, maintained that facial geography was nothing other than a life-will expressed in flesh and bone, nothing other than character transferred to the exterior. Everything which emphasized this magical interplay of the inner and the outer life, seemed to Balzac a

desirable asset. Mesmer's teaching about the magnetic transference of the will of a medium into another person, was an article of faith with him. Nor was he less credulous in his belief that the fingers were endowed with a magnetic power whereby the will could be transmitted from individual to individual. He linked these ideas up with the mystical spiritualizations of Swedenborg. All such ideas he compacted into a more or less systematic theory, and gave utterance to them through the mouth of Louis Lambert, the "chemist of the will," cut off in his prime. This Louis Lambert is at one and the same time a portrait of Balzac as he was, and a sketch of the perfected Balzac he would have liked to be; and that is why Lambert embodies more autobiography than any other of Balzac's imaginary figures.

SECOND SIGHT

EVERY face he saw was for him a charade to be unriddled. He fancied he could discern a likeness to some animal in every one of them; thought he could detect the signs which pointed to an early death; boasted that he could guess the profession of any passer-by through a study of externals of gait and clothing. Yet this intuitive knowledge did not satisfy him; it was not the supreme art of the seer; for it merely concerned the extant, that which exists in the present. His ambition went far beyond this. He wanted to be one of those who could foresee the trends that would develop in the future as an outcome of the working of the past; he wished he might be sib to the chiromancers, the soothsayers, the "voyants," the casters of horoscopes, brother of those gifted with second sight, who could judge of the inner self by what the outer self divulged, could read destiny in the lines of a hand and retrace in these same lines the story of early experiences.

According to Balzac, such magical powers of penetration are not given to persons whose intelligence is dissipated in a thousand and one activities. The idea of concentration is perpetually recurring in the mind of this author, so that in the matter of occult powers, too, he feels the necessity of having one very definite aim. Second sight is not the exclusive prerogative of sorcerers and wise women. This spontaneous and visionary knowledge is also given to mothers in relation to their children; to doctors, such as

Desplein, who from the confused sufferings of his patients could trace the cause of the ailment, and could foretell approximately how long they would live; to soldiers like Napoleon, who knew in a flash from which spot he must launch his brigades to the assault in order to decide the issue of the battle. Marsay, the seducer, has the gift, and utilizes it to catch a woman at the precise moment when she is likely to yield to his desires; Nucingen, the gambler on the stock exchange, knows the appropriate second in which to conclude the deal that will work havoc in the financial world. All these astrologers of the mind possess this knowledge because their gaze is turned inward, because their concentrated vision is able to pass beyond the physical horizons which limit the perspectives of ordinary eyes.

Herein we detect an affinity between the poet's vision and the deduction of the learned: the one, so rapid and spontaneous in apperception; the other, slow and methodical in its conclusions. Balzac was puzzled by his own intuitive faculty. He must often have contemplated his work with astonishment, as something incomprehensible, which had forced him to the philosophical outlook of a mystic whom de Maistre's Catholicism no longer sufficed. This kernel of magic, which was part and parcel of his innermost being, this inconceivable something which made him look upon art not merely as the chemistry but also as the alchemy of life, differentiated Balzac from the realists of a later day. These imitators of Balzac's art, Zola in especial, laboriously pile stone upon stone where he simply turns the ring on his finger and in an instant conjures up a palace with a thousand windows. Despite the steady and ferocious diligence he applied to the composition of his books, our first

impression is an awareness not so much of the labour, as of the witchery; we do not merely appreciate a variegated spectacle of life, but feel that the author has enriched us by the bestowal of a priceless gift.

During all the years of his creative activity, Balzac never resumed study and experiment, was never again an observer of actual life. He seldom returned to that world which lay outside the world of his own creation. His hallucinations kept him prisoner, kept him chained to his work. When he did make one of his ephemeral excursions into the real world, when he came out to do battle with his publisher, or to carry the proofs of a new novel to the printer, when he went to dine with a friend or to rummage in one of the Parisian curiosity shops, it was, rather, to gain confirmation than to acquire information. The whole science of life seemed to have penetrated into him, lay collected within his brain, warehoused as it were. Save for the almost saga-like figure of Shakespeare, one of the most puzzling things in the world of literature is the way in which Balzac acquired his amazing knowledge, how he found time to amass such stores of information concerning all classes of professions and trades, concerning so varied an assemblage of temperaments and phenomena. He spent no more than three or four youthful years as a lawyer's clerk, as a publisher, as a student. Yet he must have spent this short time to excellent advantage. He must have had an unusual capacity for absorption, and an astounding memory for every kind of minutiæ, a memory which allowed no item to go rusty, to wither away, to get confused or spoiled, a memory which kept everything ordered and docketed, ready for instant use. He had merely to press the spring and all lay available to his hand.

RAPIDITY OF VISION

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Balzac knew everything there was to know about the intricacies of lawsuits, tactics on the field of battle, manœuvring on the stock market, speculation in house property, the secrets of chemistry, the ruses of perfumers, the wiles of artists, the dissertations of theologians, fake journalism, the tricks of the theatre proper and of that other stage called politics. He knew the details of provincial life, Parisian life, and life in the world at large. He, a master flâneur, conned the lessons of the streets as he strolled along: he knew by the mere look of a house when it had been built, by whom, and for whom; he deciphered the coat-of-arms over the door, and had thoughts of the appropriate epoch called up by the architecture; he could make a shrewd guess at the rent, peopled every story with occupants, placed furniture in the rooms, and tenanted them with happy folk or unhappy; from floor to floor, he traced the network of destiny that enmeshed the whole building and its inhabitants. His knowledge was encyclopædic. He knew what a picture by Palma Vecchio would fetch, could tell you exactly how much an acre of meadowland would cost, or the price of a piece of lace, the upkeep of a tilbury and manservant. The life of society people was an open book to him, a life that fluctuated between a vegetative existence burdened with debt and a feverish state of excitement when in one year a fortune might be squandered. A few pages further in the same story, he may show us the life of a man

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trying to eke out a living on some paltry income, when the tearing of an umbrella or the breaking of a window-pane assumes the proportions of a catastrophe. Then he leads us into the purlieus where the real poor dwell, shows us how every penny is earned, depicts the impoverished water-carrier from Auvergne whose one ambition is to earn money enough to buy a pony which will save him most of the hard work on the rounds; makes us acquainted with the student and the sempstress; gives us a sight of all those quasi-vegetative existences which go to the making of a great city. A thousand landscapes rise before our eyes, forming a background against which these innumerable destinies pass to and fro. After a single glance at such a landscape, he knows all its details better than does one who has lived in it for years.

Balzac had but to cast a fleeting glance at something, and he knew it in its smallest particulars. Nay more (and this is the marvel of the creative artist's work), he knew the aspect of things he had never seen with his bodily eyes. Thus the fjords of Norway and the walls of Saragossa were as real to him as if he had visited them, and he could make them no less vivid to his readers. The rapidity of his visual intake was extraordinary. It was as if he contemplated things in their starkest nudity and distinctness, where others see them muffled in manifold draperies. He had the key to all their mysteries in his possession, so that he need but unlock the door to lay their secrets bare. Thus it was that faces opened up to him, and the character that was concealed behind dropped into his hand like a seed from a ripe fruit. With one sweep, he pushed aside all that was immaterial, and disclosed only that which was fundamental. But he did not disclose it slowly, layer by layer. On the contrary, his

revelation came with explosive force and suddenness, opening up the gold mines of life itself. And, together with these actual forms, he grasped the intangible atmosphere surrounding joy and sorrow, and seized upon the elusive emotional convulsions that hover between heaven and earth. What others see in a glass darkly, Balzac saw face to face.

LACK OF FORMAL PLAN

This exceptional power of intuitively knowing all things, is the essence of Balzac's genius. In respect of the familiar talents of the literary artist—the faculty to range qualities, to give order and coherency to characters, the power to bind and to loose—he was not strikingly endowed. There is a distinct temptation to say that he was not so much an artist within the meaning of the act as a genius. The dictum, "une telle force n'a pas besoin d'art," applies in his case admirably well. For, to be sure, we are here confronted with so stupendous a power that, like a mighty lord of the jungle, it refuses to be tamed; it is beautiful as a forest, a torrent, a thunderstorm; it has the quality of all those things whose æsthetic value lies in the intensity of their manifestations. Without symmetry, they are lovely; without the aid of the decorative arts, they are magnificent; without elaborate analysis, they are perfectly comprehensible: they rely for effect upon the immeasurable multiformity of their untamed energies.

Balzac never "composed" his novels, never had any plan for the course his story was to run. He lost himself in his work, gave himself up to it as to a passion. He floundered among words, as if his feet were caught in the intricate folds of a mass of drapery; he buried himself in words, as he might have buried his face in the fair young nakedness of his beloved. His characters come from every conceivable stratum of the population, from all the provinces of France;

he divides them up into brigades, assigning some to the cavalry, others to the artillery, and a third group to the commissariat; scatters gunpowder in the pans of their firing-pieces—and then abandons them to their own devices. Despite its beautiful—though somewhat redundant—preface, *La comédie humaine* has no inner cohesion, no definite plan. Indeed, the work is as lacking in a definite plan as life itself is—in Balzac's estimation. It does not aim at pointing a moral, nor is it intended to give a survey of the manners and customs of those days. In its own mutability, it is meant to portray the everlasting mutability of persons and things. It ebbs and flows rhythmically, like the tides.

The only law of this new cosmos was that everything which influenced or was influenced by anything else, necessarily suffered a simultaneous change; that nothing in it could be a free agent, like a god operating upon this universe from outer space, but that the very men who make an epoch are formed by the epoch in which they live, that their moral outlooks and their feelings are just as much products of the times as they themselves. Everything is relative: what passes for virtue in Paris will be considered vice in the Azores; nothing possesses a stable value; and people form their opinions of the world under stress of passion, as men appraise women. A writer cannot conjure up stability from the constant flux and change; he cannot do so precisely because he himself is a product, a creature of the age. His task must, therefore, be to depict the mental and spiritual conditions of his epoch, to show the interplay of the universal forces which stir the molecules to activity, which by turns bring them together and rend them apart. He must be a meteorologist of the social air-currents, a

mathematician of the will, an analytical chemist of the passions, a geologist who reveals the primal forms which go to the shaping of a nation. He must be a polyhistor; he must be a man who can penetrate the corporeal substance of his day, can hearken to what it has to divulge. He must be a collector of the facts, a painter of the landscapes, a crusader on behalf of the ideas, belonging to the period in which he lives. And to be all these was Balzac's supreme desire. That is why he laboured so indefatigably both at large-scale and at small-scale presentations.

Taine was right when he said that Balzac's work constituted the greatest warehouse of human documents it has been our privilege to delve in since Shakespeare's day. True, for his contemporaries and for many people of our own time, Balzac was no more than a writer of novels. Contemplated from this angle, he does not appear to be of such giant proportions. Few of his writings can be called "standard works." He must not be judged by individual books, but by the whole of his achievement. His many volumes must be contemplated as we contemplate a landscape, with its hills and dales, its far horizons, its treacherous cliffs, and its roaring torrents.

THE NOVEL AS AN ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF THE SOUL

With him began—and were it not for Dostoeffsky we might say "ended" as well—the concept of the novel as an encyclopædia of the inner universe. His predecessors knew of only two ways whereby the reluctant machinery of events could be set in motion: chance, acting from without; or love, working from within, and bringing a succession of erotic incidents in its train. Balzac showed the working of another prime motive force than the erotic. For him, desire assumed two aspects: love, in the true meaning of the word, affecting a few men and all women who happen to be born under its star, who live for love, and who die with their hearts still full of passion-fraught longing; and ambition. It was only the latter kind of desire that had genuine interest for him. But we owe a debt to Balzac's genius for having demonstrated that those energies which find release in eroticism are not the only species of impulses; that the vicissitudes of other passions are no whit less enthralling; that, without in any way scattering and wasting the primitive forces, desire can assume other forms than those of love and may contain other symbols for our enlightenment. Balzac, manipulating all the urges underlying human nature, was able to give them an amazing multiplicity of expression.

But he fed his novels with reality from an additional source. As portrayer of his contemporaries and as statistician of the relative, Balzac devoted the minutest study to

the moral, political, and æsthetic values of things. Above all, he paid close attention to those values which today constitute an almost universal standard and are regarded as wellnigh absolute. In a word, he investigated money values, and introduced them into his novels. Ever since the days when aristocratic privilege was abolished, ever since the vast differences of status were reduced to a general level of equality, money has come more and more to be the blood and the driving force of social life. Money value gradually came to determine all things; the worth of every passion was estimated in terms of the material sacrifices entailed; every human being was judged by what his income happened to be in hard cash. Money circulates in these novels. Balzac allows his heroes to accumulate vast fortunes, only to lose all in the end; he depicts frantic speculation on the stock exchange, mighty battles which entail as tremendous an expenditure of energy as did Leipzig or Waterloo; he presents us with a score of different types of money-grubber, those who are moved primarily by greed, or hate, or extravagance, or ambition, or what not; we see people who seek money for money's sake, others who love it because it is a symbol of something they greatly desire, and yet others who look upon it as a means to an end. Balzac was the first to demonstrate boldly and fearlessly that money dovetails into the noblest, the finest, the most spiritual of feelings.

All the persons of his novels calculate the cost of their actions, just as we, likewise, have willy-nilly to do. His ingénus on their first arrival in Paris know exactly how much a call on a society dame will cost them; they know that an expensive costume is necessary, elegant footwear, a carriage, a suitable apartment, a manservant, and a thousand trifles and frivolities. All this must be paid for; experience

costs money. They know how painfully embarrassing a coat which has not been well tailored may prove to be; they are fully aware that it is money alone, or the appearance of being wealthy, which will open the doors of society to them. The catastrophic possibility of being humiliated in the eyes of the world acts as a spur to their ambition, and arouses a passionate desire to make good. Balzac goes all the way with them. He calculates the total of the spendthrift's expenditure, reckons up the usurer's percentages, the merchant's profits, the dandy's debts, the amount of the bribe slipped into the hands of a venal politician.

Since money is the material precipitate of a universally prevalent ambition, since it permeates every emotion, Balzac, the pathologist of social life, had to recognize when the crisis was likely to occur in the ailing body of society, had to examine its blood under the microscope, and learn its monetary content. For life is permeated with money; it supplies oxygen to the lungs; none can do without it. The ambitious man needs it to gratify his ambition, the lover to serve his love. Least of all can the artist forgo it; and Balzac, burdened as he was for a lifetime with debts, knew this from bitter experience.

No one can afford to ignore Balzac's work. The eighty volumes which comprise his literary achievement, represent an epoch, a universe, a whole generation. Never before had so vast an enterprise been deliberately undertaken; never has the temerity of a man's unbounded will been better requited. He who, tired with the labours of the day, wishes to rest and enjoy himself, has but to take down one of these volumes, and a world of new pictures, of new acquaintances, opens up before his eyes. Here is excitement enough, to be sure, and a stirring play of circumstances;

dramatic situations fit to inspire a hundred playwrights. The man of science will find a satiety of problems to cudgel his brains withal, spread before him with lavish hand. The lover will receive a preparatory schooling for the ecstasy that is to come into his own life. But the most considerable legacy of all is left to the imaginative writer.

In the plans Balzac made for his *Comédie humaine*, we find that forty of the novels he had contemplated putting into the series were never written. One was to have been named "Moscou," another "La plaine de Wagram"; "Les paysans" was begun, but never finished. We might almost look upon it as a stroke of good fortune that the scheme remained incomplete. Balzac once said: "The man of genius is one who can invariably convert his thoughts into deeds. But the truly outstanding genius does not unremittingly allow this evolution to take place; if he did, he would be the equal of God." Had Balzac been able to complete his stupendous scheme, his work would have passed into the realm of the inconceivable. It would have become a monster, scaring subsequent writers by the magnitude of its inaccessibility. As it is, it acts as a stimulus without parallel, and serves as a magnificent example for all those whose creative will is pointed towards the unattainable.

We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
When such is wanted.

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Dickens

1812–1870

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A WRITER LOVED MORE THAN ALL OTHERS

The love Dickens's contemporaries lavished upon the creator of Pickwick is not to be assessed by accounts given in books and biographies. Love lives and breathes only in the spoken word. To get an adequate idea of the intensity of this love, one must catch (as I once caught) an Englishman old enough to have youthful memories of the days when Dickens was still alive. Preferably it should be someone who finds it hard even now to speak of him as Charles Dickens, choosing, rather, to use the affectionate nickname of "Boz." The emotion, tinged with melancholy, which these old reminiscences call up, gives us of a younger generation some inkling of the enthusiasm that inspired the hearts of thousands when the monthly instalments in their blue covers (great rarities, now) arrived at English homes. At such times, my old Dickensian told me, people would walk a long way to meet the postman when a fresh number was due, so impatient were they to read what Boz had to tell. They had hungered for this day ever since the previous month, hoping, wondering, disputing as to whether young Copperfield would marry Dora or Agnes, delighted at the prospect of Micawber having to face another crisis in his affairs, which they knew well enough he would get through safely with the help of hot punch and good temper. How could they be expected to wait patiently until the letter-carrier, lumbering along on an old nag, would ar-

rive with the solution of these burning problems? When the appointed hour came round, old and young would sally forth, walking two miles and more to the post office merely to have the issue sooner. On the way home they would start reading, those who had not the luck of holding the book looking over the shoulder of the more fortunate mortal; others would set about reading aloud as they walked; only persons with a genius for self-sacrifice would defer a purely personal gratification, and would scurry back to share the treasure with wife and child.

In every village, in every town, in the whole of the British Isles, and far beyond, away into the remotest parts of the earth where the English-speaking nations had gone to settle and colonize, Charles Dickens was loved. People loved him from the first moment when (through the medium of print) they made his acquaintance until his dying day. Never, during the whole course of the nineteenth century, was there so steadfast, so hearty a relationship between a writer and his fellow-countrymen. He shot up, like a rocket, into celebrity; but his fires never paled; his sun never lost its radiance.

Four hundred copies of the first instalment of *The Pickwick Papers* were printed. By the time the fifteenth appeared, the issues amounted to forty thousand. Mr. Pickwick very soon made his way into German homes. Hundreds, nay thousands of little volumes, costing no more than a groschen, sowed laughter and joy even in the saddest hearts. Little Nicholas Nickleby travelled to America, Australia, Canada, closely followed by Oliver Twist and the countless other characters created out of this inexhaustibly fertile brain. Today there are millions of copies of Dickens's books in circulation, big and small, thick and

thin, cheap issues for those whose purse is ill-lined, expensive volumes for the wealthy. In the United States, the collected works are sold at a price which, I fancy, is exceptional even for the most renowned of authors. But no matter the size or the price, all these books contain a treasure-house of laughter between their covers, laughter which bubbles over as soon as one turns the pages.

Such love as was given to Dickens is unexampled in the world of literature. If, in the course of his life, this devotion did not increase, it was merely because a maximum once attained is a maximum, in emotions no less than in material quantities. The first time Dickens gave a reading, the first time he came face to face with his public, was an occasion for an extraordinary demonstration. The hall was packed, people clambered up the pillars, crept under the platform, did incredible things in order to hear the voice of their beloved author. In the States, despite the wintry cold, people would camp in front of the box-office, catching what rest they could on the mattresses they had lugged along with them, satisfying their hunger with food brought to them by the waiters from a near-by restaurant. No hall proved large enough to accommodate the crowds, so that in the end a church in Brooklyn was converted into a huge reading room for this most popular of authors. Standing aloft in the pulpit, Dickens read the stories of Oliver Twist and of Little Nell.

Dickens's fame endured, eclipsing that of Walter Scott, and putting the genius even of Thackeray into the shade. And when at last the fires were quenched, when Dickens died, the whole of the English-speaking world mourned a common loss. People meeting casually in the street spoke of the event; the news passed from mouth to mouth. London

was crushed as if it had received tidings of a great defeat on the battlefield. His body was laid to rest between Shakespeare and Fielding, in Westminster Abbey, the Pantheon of England's mighty dead. Thousands came to honour his obsequies, and for days and weeks the simple stone bearing his name was covered with flowers and wreaths. Even today, more than half a century after his death, it is rare to find no blossoms on his grave, placed there by a grateful hand. His fame and the love he inspired have not faded with the passing of the years. Ever since the day when his fellow-countrymen and their American cousins bestowed on him the wonderful and unexpected gift of fame, Charles Dickens has been the best-loved and most honoured story-teller of the Anglo-Saxon commonwealth.

DICKENS AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE ENGLISH TRADITION

Two things are needed to bring about so amazing a reaction to creative work, a reaction that was unprecedented both in the depth of the feelings it aroused and in the wide scope of its influence: the identification of a man of genius with the traditions of his epoch. These two elements are usually in sharp opposition, they are as antagonistic as fire and water. Indeed, we might say that such antagonism to the old tradition is a mark of the true genius, for a man of genius creates a tradition of his own. The man of genius and the epoch in which he lives are, as it were, two planets exchanging light, but circling in orbits that belong to separate sidereal systems. Their paths may intersect at times, but never merge.

Yet in the case of Dickens, we witness the almost incomprehensible phenomenon of the merging of two such disparate entities. Dickens was the only writer of the century whose outlook on life fully coincided with the spiritual needs of his day. His novels are an expression of Victorian taste, his work is the embodiment of English tradition. Dickens represents the humour, the philosophy, the morality, the æsthetics, the mental and artistic make-up, the peculiar and to Continentals often poignantly sympathetic outlook, of thirty million fellow-mortals on his side of the Channel. Can we regard him, Charles Dickens, as the "author" of these works? Are they not, rather, an embodiment

of the English spirit—a product of the strongest, richest, most highly individual and by this sign the most perilous of all modern cultures? Its vital energy cannot be estimated too highly. The Englishman is far more English than the German is German. The fact of being English does not merely colour the whole mentality; it penetrates into the very blood, regulating its flow, pulsing athwart the most intimate and secret recesses of the individual, permeating that which is the most primitively personal of all, namely the artistic impulse.

A British artist is more genuinely true to racial type than a German or a Frenchman. Every artist in the British Isles, every genuine artist that is to say, has for this very reason wrestled with the Briton within him; and yet, despite the ardour and the desperate energy they have brought to the combat, they have never succeeded in strangling the over-mastering tradition. For this tradition has struck deep roots; and he who would pluck what is essentially British out of his soul plucks at his own heart-strings and dies of his wound. A few noble spirits have striven to free themselves and to become citizens of the world. But those who in any way succeeded, were cold-shouldered by their fellow-countrymen. We have but to recall the fates of Byron, Shelley, and Oscar Wilde, to realize how true this is. They were ostracized in their lifetimes because they wished to exchange their British citizenship for world citizenship, because they gave frank expression to their hatred of the undying bourgeois elements in British life and character. But they only succeeded in tearing their own lives to tatters.

The British tradition is the most firmly rooted in the whole range of national traditions; it is likewise the most victorious, and for this very reason the most perilous where

art is concerned. It is dangerous because it is insidious: it is no frosty waste, unfriendly and inhospitable, but entices the stranger to the warm fireside, where he will experience the cosiest of comforts. At the same time it will fence him in with moral prejudices, which hamper and constrain, according ill with the free flight of artistic fancy. It is a modest dwelling, more than a little stuffy, protected from the storms of life, cheerful, friendly, and hospitable, a real home with all the fires of middle-class contentment alight. And yet it is a prison-house for those who yearn to make the world their home, for those who have the nomad spirit in their blood, to whom adventurous journeyings into limitless spaces are the sap of life. Dickens, however, was perfectly satisfied within the four walls of the English tradition. He felt at ease in this atmosphere, and never travelled beyond the frontiers of English art, morality, and æsthetics. No revolutionary was he. The artist in him never played traitor to the Englishman; and, indeed, as time went on, the artist's lineaments were merged in those of the Englishman. Dickens's creation is firmly rooted in the tradition of Old England, and rarely does it budge so much as an inch outside this circle of interests. But his work soars upward into unexpected heights, and the whole architectonic is delightful. His achievement is the unconscious expression of his country's aspirations metamorphosed into art. And when we study the intensity, the exceptional merits, and the missed opportunities, of his imaginative production, we are really contemplating these things as they manifest themselves in England herself.

MIDDLE-CLASS COMFORT AND CONTENTMENT

Dickens is, therefore, among imaginative writers, the supreme incorporation of the English tradition between the period of Napoleon's rise and fall (the heroic past) and the period of British imperialism (a glorious dream of the future). If he only attained the extraordinary heights he did, and not the sublimest pinnacles to which his genius had predestined him, this was not because England or the English race acted as an obstacle to his upward path, but because he was born out of due time, born into the Victorian era. Shakespeare, too, was the most superb literary and imaginative expression of his epoch; but his England, Elizabethan England, was a country full of youthful energy, eager for adventure, fresh in mind and spirit, ardent and vibrant, just beginning to stretch forth its vigorous hands to grasp at the imperium mundi. Shakespeare was the child of a century when deeds and strong will and energy were demanded of its sons. New horizons were opening; in America, vast wealth was to be obtained; the hereditary foe had been crushed; the Renaissance was flashing beacon lights over land and sea from Italy into the northern isles of mist; a religion had been defeated; the world was ready to receive new and living values. Shakespeare was the incarnation of a heroic England; Dickens was the symbol of the middle classes. He, too, was the loyal subject of a queen, but a queen of quite another quality, a woman of gentle, housewifely,

unpretentious character, good old Queen Victoria; he was the citizen of a prudish, comfortable, well-ordered State, a State lacking verve and passionate enthusiasms.

Dickens's flight into the empyrean was impeded by the leaden weight of an epoch which was no longer hungry, but merely wished to digest. Gentle breezes played on the sails of his boat and did not carry him away from the English coast in search of unknown beauties and the pathless regions of the infinite. He is cautious, keeps always to that which is familiar and has been sanctioned by long usage. Just as Shakespeare embodied the courage of an England greedy for power and expansion, so Dickens represents the prudence natural to a country which has got what it wants. At the very moment when Dickens first saw the light, in 1812, a darkness had begun to spread over the world; a great fire had been extinguished, a fire that had threatened to consume the amorphous framework of the European States. The Guards of Napoleon's army had been broken against the British infantry at Waterloo; England had been saved, and had escorted the beaten foe to a far-off island in a desolate sea, to eke out his days deprived of crown and power. Dickens had not been there to witness the rise of the fiery comet, he had not seen the light shining across the skies of the world, nor the fiery glimmer which arose simultaneously from the extremities of Europe as witness to forces that were to combine to destroy the conqueror. His eyes opened to behold nothing but the mist-wreaths of his native isle.

The youth was launched into a world whose heroes were all dead. A few there were, even in England, who would not believe this thing. In their enthusiasm they would gladly have put a spoke in the wheel of time's chariot,

would gladly have recaptured the zest of earlier days; but England, desiring peace and quiet, thrust these insurgent sons from her. They fled her shores, and sought the lands where romance still had a home; they tried to rekindle the flames; but fate was too strong for them. Shelley was drowned in the waters of the Tyrrhenian sea; Byron was struck down by fever at Missolonghi: the days for heroic adventures had passed beyond recall. The earth had put on a sober livery.

England was feasting upon the blood-stained booty: the burgher, the merchant, the broker, reigned supreme, and lolled at ease upon the throne as if it were a couch. England was digesting her repast. In those days, if an art was to please, it had to be digestible. It must not disturb, or agitate the feelings; it was expected to stroke you gently, or tickle you; it could be sentimental, but not tragic. No one wanted to tremble and shudder as if a flash of lightning had pierced to the heart, making the breath stick in the throat and the blood run cold. These horrors were things only too familiar in the everyday life of the recent past, when the newspapers had brought tidings of events taking place in France, or Russia, or elsewhere. To be made to feel a little creepy was all right. The story of the ups and downs of quiet people's lives was permissible. What was wanted at that time was a fireside art; books that could be read comfortably while the winds howled outside and the rain battered against the window-panes; stories that could be enjoyed at one's own warm hearth, while the flames leaped and crackled safely in the grate; an art that sent a glow all over the body as did a fragrant cup of tea, not one that would thrill the heart with fierce intoxication. The conquerors of yesteryear have become so pusillanimous that they are even frightened at

the possibility of arousing their own strong feelings. All they want now is to keep and to hold; the times for doughty deeds and Odysseys are gone. In the books they read, just as in their everyday life, they wish for tempered passions; they have no desire for ecstasy, wanting merely to experience normal emotions that will run a demure course. For the English at that time, happiness and peaceful rumination were identical assets; æsthetics spelt morality, and morality meant prudery; the consciousness of nationality signified loyalty to the sovereign and the British constitution; love was regarded as synonymous with marriage. All the values of life had become anæmic. England was content and desired no change.

If an art is to find acceptance in a nation so self-satisfied as England then was, it needs must be content and satisfied likewise; it must sing the praises of the extant social order, not endeavour to soar above and beyond. And a genius arose to express this urge towards a comfortable, friendly, cheerful, and easily digestible art; just as once before, in the Elizabethan era, a Shakespeare had been born to voice very different aspirations. Dickens was the incorporation of the artistic needs of the England of his day. And precisely because he happened to be born at that time, he fulfilled his nation's requirements, and therewith ascended the ladder of fame. It was a tragedy for him, however, that the nation's needs in his day should have been what they were. His art was nourished upon the disingenuous moral code of a well-fed England which desired nothing so much as to be comfortable. Were it not for the outstanding powers of the author's imagination, did not his delectable sense of humour pervade and irradiate the vapid emotional content of the work, his achievement would have had value for the Eng-

lish world of that day alone. His novels would have meant no more to us than a thousand others of his own land and century. It is only when one is able to hate the insincerity and narrow-mindedness of the Victorian era with one's whole heart and soul, that one can fully appreciate the amazing genius of the man who could make interesting this smug and detestable world, make it not only interesting but even lovable, turning the most platitudinous and prosy of social outlooks and conditions into living poetry.

Dickens himself never fought against this England of his. Yet in the depths of his unconscious, the artist was at war with the Englishman. At first he had stepped forward sure-footed and strong; but little by little he sank into the soft, yielding sands of his day, becoming weary, until at last he was satisfied to walk easily along the beaten trail, the broad trackway left by the old tradition of his country. Conquered by the spirit of his time, Dickens always reminds me of Gulliver in the land of the Lilliputians. While the giant slept, the little folk fastened him down to the ground with a thousand "slender ligatures," nor did they loose him till he had promised to conform in all things to the laws of the country. In like manner, during his slumber as an unknown person, English tradition had pegged Dickens down and prisoned him; and his success tied him the firmer to the English soil, for with success came celebrity, and, once famous, his hands were thenceforth bound.

After a somewhat dreary childhood, he found a job as shorthand reporter in parliament, trying his luck occasionally in writing little sketches with a view to increasing his modest earnings rather than from any spontaneous urge towards creative work. But his first attempt proved success-

ful, and he was asked for more of the same kind. Then a publisher approached him with the proposal that he should write humorous and satirical articles concerning the adventures of an imaginary sporting club, which should be to a certain extent the text for making fun of the English gentry of the day. Dickens decided to accept the offer, and, after modifying the scheme to one more in conformity with his own tastes and aptitudes, he produced the first instalment of *The Pickwick Papers*. The success it obtained was unprecedented; two months later, Boz had become a national figure. He developed the original idea, and Pickwick became the hero of a strange kind of novel, which, in its turn, was a notable success. The meshes of the net were being drawn tighter; quietly and surely Dickens's reputation was placing invisible fetters upon him. One success led to another, and forced him more and more surely to follow the drift of his contemporaries' tastes.

The million-meshed net of applause, success, and the personal pride of the artist in his achievement, was henceforward to bind him fast within the sphere of English limitations, and to ensure that he should never transgress the æsthetic and moral code of his homeland. Thus he remained for ever the captive of British tradition, of bourgeois tastes, a modern Gulliver among the Lilliputians. His wonderful imagination, which like an eagle might have soared high above and beyond this narrow earth, was chained by the feet to the rock of success. His artistic aspirations were burdened by a deep feeling of contentment. For Dickens was, indeed, content. Content with the world, with England, with his contemporaries—and they with him. Neither he nor they wanted things otherwise. There was no wrath in his heart, urging him to stir up, to goad, to uplift;

that basic impulse of most great artists to argue things out with the deity, never arose in him; nor had he any desire to overthrow the world and bray it to pieces in order that he might fashion it anew. Dickens was pious, and was filled with the fear of God; he felt a kindly admiration for the existing order, had a pleasurable delight in it that was child-like, innocent, and playful. Yes, he was content. His wants were few and simple.

None the less, he had a vocation. Once upon a time he had been a poor, unknown wight, scorned of destiny, labouring at ill-paid tasks such as fall to the lot of the young. The iron had gone home. His childhood had been a tragically pitiful experience; but it was during these tender years that the seed of creative fancy had been sown, and had taken root in the fecund soil of suffering stoically endured. When the day of his power arrived and he saw that an opportunity was presenting itself for him to exercise a wide influence upon his contemporaries, he vowed he would take a noble vengeance for the bitter experiences of his own youthful days. His novels should be the instrument for helping the poor, forsaken, and forgotten children who, like himself of old, were suffering injustice at the hands of teachers, badly conducted schools, indifferent parents; who were pining away because of the slothfulness, the lack of affection, the selfishness of their natural protectors and guardians. He wanted to capture a few of the fragrant flowers of childhood for these little ones, blossoms which for lack of the refreshing dew of kindliness had for him withered ere he had been able to enjoy them. In later years, life lavished her favours upon him, and reproach died out of his heart; nevertheless, memories of his own childhood made him the champion of children till the end. His unique

purpose in life, the resolve which animated his will as an artist, was to succour the weak: in this one point he wished to see an improvement in the social order. But he did not inveigh against established institutions, or shake his fist in the face of his generation, or threaten the lawgivers and citizens who were responsible; he did not denounce the mendacity inherent in social conventions; what he did was to point a wary finger towards an open wound.

At that date, Britain was the only country that had not experienced the throes of the revolutionary movements of 1848. It was natural, therefore, that it should never enter Dickens's head to want to overthrow the constitution and begin afresh; what he wished to do was to correct and improve the existing order, to tone down and ameliorate the phenomena of social injustice when they had become too acute and too painful: but he had no intention to dig them up and destroy them like foul weeds. True to his nationality, he did not dare tamper with the foundations of morality; these were as sacrosanct as the Bible.

Contentedness, the distillate of the vapid emotional make-up of his epoch, was Dickens's fundamental characteristic. He did not ask much of life; nor did his heroes. Balzac's heroes were greedy for power and dominance; they were eaten up with ambition; they were never satiated; each wished to conquer the world, to overthrow the existing scheme of things; they were anarchists and tyrants; they had Napoleonic temperaments. Dostoeffsky's heroes, too, were filled with ardour and ecstasy; with indomitable wills, they spurned the everyday world, and, magnificently dissatisfied, they stormed forward beyond the life of spurious reality into the truer life beyond; they had no desire to be citizens, ordinary human beings; inspiring them all,

flashing athwart an outward semblance of meekness, was a pride fraught with many dangers—the determination to be saviours, redeemers. Balzac's heroes would gladly have subjugated the world: Dostoeffsky's heroes wished to transcend it. Both were resolved to outsoar a humdrum environment; they were like arrows speeding into the infinite. Dickens's types, on the other hand, were modest in their claims. What was the acme of their desires? A few hundred pounds a year, an amiable wife, a dozen children, a well-appointed table and succulent meats to entertain their friends withal, a cottage not too far from London, the windows giving a view over the green countryside, a pretty little garden, and a modicum of happiness. Their ideal was a middle-class respectability. We have to make up our minds to this when we embark on a novel by Dickens. None of his characters want to see a change in the ordering of the world; they desire neither poverty nor riches; they are satisfied with a middling amount of this life's goods—a maxim so prudent and wise where shopkeepers and petty men of business are concerned, and yet one full of risk for an artist. Dickens's ideals took their colour from the atmosphere of the day. The creator behind the work, he who was to bring a universe out of chaos, was not a wrathful deity, gigantic and supra-human, but a contented observer, a loyal cit. The whole entourage of Dickens's novels is one of bourgeois smugness.

APOTHEOSIS OF THE COMMONPLACE

In what, then, did his mighty and unforgettable achievement consist? He discovered the romantic element that lay perdu in the bourgeoisie; he unveiled the poetry that was ambushed in the prosaic. The commonplaces in the life of all the nations of the earth, these matter-of-fact ingredients, were converted by him into something imaginative, fanciful, entrancing. He flooded the grey mass with sunshine. Anyone who has been in England and who has witnessed the emergence of the sun after rain, the glorious brightness which pierces through the clouds and the fog so suddenly, filling sky and earth with effulgence, will realize the kind of welcome accorded by his compatriots to an author who is able by his art to grant a similar moment of joyful release from the leaden gloom of their lives. Dickens spread a golden halo about this humdrum existence; he gave to simple things and unpretentious people a glory all their own; he created an idyll for the English. He sought his characters in the narrow streets of the suburbs which were growing up round the big towns, he explored regions which by his predecessors in the world of literature had been given the go-by. The latter had found their inspiration in the mansions of the wealthy, beneath scintillating chandeliers; or in the world of the fairies; or in remote corners of the globe, among the unusual and the extraordinary. The worthy burgher was for them the very incarnation of

all that was ponderous and earthy: what they enjoyed depicting was the fiery, sumptuous, aspiring soul, the lyrical and heroic man. But Dickens was not ashamed of making a simple wage-earner into one of his heroes. He was a "self-made man," having risen from an environment he never ceased to regard with filial piety. His enthusiastic delight in the commonplace was amazing, and no less astonishing was his appreciation of quite worthless and old-fashioned things and the small change of life. His books are veritable curiosity shops stuffed with a queer jumble of gimcracks, which ordinary mortals would look upon as valueless; they are a medley of strangely useless drolleries and nullities which for decades had been awaiting a purchaser. But when he took these ancient, worthless, dusty things in hand, when he cleaned them and polished them, ranged them side by side in an orderly way, then they sparkled and glittered in the radiant sunshine of his cheerfulness. They shone with renewed and unsuspected brightness.

Thus he took the many despised and petty emotions of the human heart, studied their workings, assembled their machinery, and set them pulsating with renewed life. They would start gently to hum, to murmur; and, finally, they would softly sing some long-forgotten melody, sweeter and lovelier by far than the dreary ballads of the knights from a legendary past or the songs of the Lady of the Lake. Dickens, as it were, lifted the whole bourgeois world from the ash-heap on which it lay, and built it up of old, forgotten, far-off things from days of long ago. In his works these things were born anew into a living world. By kindly forbearance, he made their foolishnesses and limitations understandable; by his love, he brought their beauties out into the light; their superstitions, he changed into a fresh

and imaginative mythology. The chirp of a cricket on the hearth became music in his books, the bells ringing the old year out and the new year in had tongues to tell a tale, the magic of Christmas reconciled the spirit of poesy with the spirit of religion. To the smallest festivity he was able to give a deep significance, and to these simple folk he could reveal all that their grey lives held of poetry and romance, was able to enhance their love for that which they already loved above all else in the world—their homes, with the cosy room, the fire crackling on the hearth, the logs spluttering and hissing, the tea-table, and the kettle singing on the hob; home, which shut them safely away from ravening storms and the mad, bad world without. He wished to teach this poem of everyday life to all and sundry, but especially to those condemned to pass the whole of their existence in the realm of the commonplace. To thousands, nay to millions, he revealed where to find the everlasting spark in their uneventful lives, where to look for the glow of quiet joy hidden beneath the ashes of the familiar; he taught them how to fan the spark into a cheery and grateful blaze.

He wanted to help the children and the downtrodden. On the other hand, anything, whether material or spiritual, which rose above the middle-class stratum of life, was antipathetic to him. His whole heart was given to the ordinary, to the average. The wealthy, and people of aristocratic birth, all the spoiled darlings at life's table, were obnoxious to him. In his books, persons of this class are almost invariably scoundrels and niggards; he does not give us portraits of them, but caricatures. He simply couldn't abide them. As a youngster, he had seen his "prodigal father" go to jail for debt; had been taken to visit the old man in the Marshalsea; had blacked boots, had carried things to

the pawnshop, and had come to know only too well the wretchedness and degradation lack of money entails. For over a year he earned his living in a blacking warehouse at Old Hungerford Stairs, tying, trimming, and labelling the pots, hundreds a day, until his little hands were hot and aching, and he was sore put to it to keep back the burning tears. How well he remembered the gnawings of an empty stomach, he who had every morning gone forth to work, through the dank and fog of the London streets, without a morsel in his small belly to comfort him! There was no one who could give him a helping hand; carriages clattered by as the lad shivered with cold, riders on horseback trotted past; but no rich man's door ever opened to give him shelter and warmth.

And yet kindliness and generosity were bestowed on him at times—by humble folk who were themselves nipped by poverty; and them he was in the future to requite with his gratitude. His work is eminently democratic—not socialist, to be sure; he had no mind for radical change. It is woven of love and compassion, and these two qualities endow it with a pathos most disquieting at times. His favourite dwelling place was in the genteel, lower-middle-class stratum of society, in that realm which lies somewhere between the workhouse and the mansions of the well-to-do. Here he felt comfortable, at his ease. He paints the rooms with breadth, giving them cosiness and snugness, as if he intended to take up his quarters in them himself; he weaves the destinies of these simple folk out of sunshine; he dreams their dreams; he is their champion, their preacher, their darling, the radiant and inextinguishable orb which warms their drab and unpretentious universe.

How rich this universe became under his magic wand!

How wonderfully transfigured was the modest reality of petty existences! The whole of this community, with its dwellings and furnishings, its medley of trades and callings and professions, its limitless mishmash of emotions, became a cosmos under his hand, became an integral whole, with its own stars, and its own household gods. Treasures were unearthed from the seeming monotony and stagnation; his keen vision sought them out, and brought them into the light of day. From the flaccid waters he fished up human beings—sufficient, indeed, to people a city! Among these characters, unforgettable figures stand forth, figures that will endure the test of time, everlasting in the realm of literature, their sayings and their names having long since become proverbial and forming part of the national speech. Pickwick and Sam Weller, Pecksniff and Betsy Trotwood —names that magically call up smiling memories.

How vast is the wealth his books contain! David Copperfield's adventures alone would have supplied an ordinary mortal with material for a lifetime. Dickens's works are real novels as far as abundance of material and unremitting activity are concerned; they are not, like practically all German novels, merely psychological sketches or short stories that have been stretched and padded out to make them bulk as novels. There is never a dead point in Dickens's books, never any empty, sandy wastes; the ebb and flow of their events is full and regular; like the ocean, they are fathomless, and reach farther than the eye can see. Indeed it is difficult to survey in one glance this multitude of cheerful and busy individuals; they throng the stage of the heart, elbowing one another aside, pushing their way to the front, passing along to yield ground to fresh arrivals. They approach, like rollers from the Atlantic, emerging from

the tentacular towns and breaking in spume upon the rocks of events; others arrive, wave upon wave of them, curving and crashing, swallowing one another up, catching the unwary in their backwash: yet their movements are not the result of chance; behind the apparent confusion, order reigns. The warp and woof of these countless lives are dexterously woven together into a gaily coloured carpet. Even if a character does no more than stalk across the stage, he is not brought on for nothing, he is not lost sight of. Every event and every figure has its purpose, lends completeness to the whole, contributes its quota of light and shade. Crisp, or merry, or serious, the happenings chase one another like kittens at play; the shuttlecock of events is ever on the go; within a few pages he runs up and down the whole gamut of the emotions; all of life's possibilities are blended by the subtle hand of the master: joy, horror, and arrogance; tears welling up from deeply stirred hearts, or flooding the face in sheer delight. Clouds pack away, only to form again, lowering, and to break up anew. At length the storms are past, and in the purified air the sun shines again, bright and wonderful.

AMAZING POWERS OF VISUALIZATION

MANY of the novels are veritable Iliads, describing thousands of individual struggles, Iliads of a terrestrial world whence the gods have fled; others, again, are peaceful and modest idylls; all of them, the best as well as the worst, have this in common: we are confronted with a lavish and spendthrift multiplicity. Another feature, a feature we find even in the gloomiest and the most untamed of his books, is that no matter how tragical the landscape, from time to time we encounter certain endearing details peeping at us like delicate blossoms from the chinks of rugged rocks. These unforgettable and charming details flower in every nook and cranny; like wild, sweet-smelling violets, modestly hiding under leaves, they await our coming as we saunter through the wide stretches of print; we meet with springs of cheerfulness at every turn, gushing careless and gay from out the hard rocks of circumstance. There are whole chapters in Dickens's works that are only comparable to a countryside, the effect they produce on us is so fresh and pure, so divinely unsullied by earthly moil, so sunny and fragrant with serene human kindliness. Were it for these passages alone, we cannot help loving the man who has bestowed them upon us with such generous hands.

I wonder if anyone has ever been able to give an account of all the characters that make their bow to us in his books.

And what a jovial, merry, good-humoured crowd they are, always ready for a laugh, invariably amusing. There they are, drawn to the life, with their crotchets and whims and peculiarities, their strange callings, their delicious adventures. Though they are legion, not one resembles the other. We are given the minutest of personal details; they are not mere sketches, but the liveliest of mortals, their senses fully developed. They are not the figments of a fertile imagination, but real flesh-and-blood human beings, created and formed by the incomparable insight and understanding of this poet.

His powers of penetration are almost miraculous. Dickens was a visualizing genius. Look at the portraits we have of him in youth and, better still, as an elderly man. The whole countenance is dominated by those wonderful eyes. They are not the eyes of an inspired poet, they do not roll in a fine frenzy or veil themselves behind an elegiac melancholy, they are not soft and yielding in expression, nor are they the fiery orbs of a visionary. They are essentially English eyes: cold, grey, sharp, like steel. They were steely as a safe within which a treasure is locked, whence it cannot be stolen or lost, where neither fire nor air can penetrate to destroy; and this treasure consisted of all that he had observed once and put away, yesterday or many years ago—the sublimest side by side with the most trivial of items. It might be merely a sign over a shop which had caught his attention as a little chap of five; or a tree with its fresh young leaves nodding in at the window. Nothing escaped these eyes; they were stronger than time; carefully, laboriously, they hoarded impression upon impression in the storehouses of memory, ready for the day when the master should have need of them. Nothing dribbled away into for-

getfulness, nothing became pale or blurred; everything lay there awaiting his good time, full of the sap of life, colourful and distinct; nothing died or faded. This visual memory of Dickens's was unparalleled.

He cuts through the fog surrounding the years of childhood like a clipper driving through the waves. In *David Copperfield*, that masked autobiography, we are given reminiscences of a two-year-old child concerning his mother with her pretty hair and youthful shape, and Peggotty with no shape at all; memories which are like silhouettes standing out from the blank of his infancy. There are never any blurred contours where Dickens is concerned; he does not give us hazy visions, but portraits whose every detail is sharply defined. His powers of depiction are so overwhelming that the reader is not called upon for any effort of imagination—and this goes far to explain the vogue his books enjoyed with a nation that did not shine by its imaginative faculties. Place them in the hands of twenty different illustrators and demand a portrait of Copperfield or of Pickwick. What will be the result? We shall be given twenty pictures almost incredibly similar, showing us a kindly old gentleman in a white waistcoat, tights and gaiters, and a pair of beaming eyes twinkling behind glasses; or a shy, fair-haired lad sitting upon the box-seat of the Yarmouth coach. Dickens portrays so clearly, so minutely, that his readers sees what he makes them see, much as if he had hypnotized them. His is not the wizard's eye of a Balzac which allows the characters at first to struggle out of chaos and to take shape by slow degrees amid the fiery welter of their passions. Dickens's vision is a purely terrestrial one; it has something of the seaman's keenness, of the hunter's alertness, of the falcon's sharpness of discernment, for the

tiniest human foibles and virtues. But, as he himself once said, it is the little things that give meaning to life. He is, therefore, perpetually on the watch for tokens, be they never so slight; a spot of grease on a dress, an awkward gesture caused by shyness, a strand of reddish hair peeping from beneath a wig if its wearer happens to lose his temper. He captures all the nuances of a handshake, knows what the pressure of each finger signifies; detects the shades of meaning in a smile.

Before he took to the career of a writer, he was parliamentary reporter for a newspaper. In this capacity he became proficient in the art of summary, in compressing long-winded discussions; as shorthand writer he conveyed a word by a stroke, a whole sentence by a few curves and dashes. So in later days as an author he invented a kind of shorthand to reality, consisting of little signs instead of lengthy descriptions, an essence of observation distilled from the innumerable happenings of life. He has an uncannily sharp eye for the detection of these insignificant externals; he never overlooks anything; his memory and his keenness of perception are like a photographic plate which, in the hundredth part of a second, fixes the least expression, the slightest gesture, and yields a perfectly precise negative. Nothing escapes his notice. In addition, this perspicacious observation is enhanced by a marvellous power of refraction which, instead of presenting an object as merely reflected in its ordinary proportions from the surface of a mirror, gives us an image clothed in an excess of characteristics. For he invariably underlines the personal attributes of his characters, drawing these peculiarities out of the realm of the objective and placing them in that of caricature. By rendering these characteristics more intense, he transforms them into

symbols. The rotundity of a Pickwick is an outward and visible sign of his psychical plumpness; Jingle's leanness expresses his inner aridity; evil becomes satanical; good puts on flesh and fullness.

All great artists exaggerate, and Dickens is no exception to the rule. But his exaggeration tends towards humour rather than towards the grandiose. His whole diverting method of presentation arises, not so much from caprice on his part, or from playfulness, as from the exceptional angle whence he chooses to contemplate the world about him. Things impinge upon his retina with exceptional distinctness, over-distinctness one might say, so that they easily get transformed into marvels and caricatures by the time they are reflected back upon life.

This extraordinary optical faculty amounted to genius in Dickens. He cannot, as a matter of fact, be regarded as a great psychologist. Not his the special power of one who plumbs the depths of men's minds, to find there the seeds of light or of darkness, out of which to conjure up the shapes and colours of things, as if able to stimulate a mysterious process of growth. His psychology began with the visible; he gained his insight into character by observation of the exterior—the most delicate and fine minutiæ of the outward semblance, it is true, those utmost tenuosities which only the eyes that are rendered acute by a superlative imagination can perceive. Like the English philosophers, he does not begin with assumptions and suppositions, but with characteristics. He lays hold of the most inconspicuous and corporeal expressions of the soul, and by the magic of his method of caricature, he brings the whole personality visibly and palpably before our eyes. Through traits, he discloses types: Creakle had no voice, but spoke in a whis-

per; the exertion speech cost him, or the consciousness of talking in that feeble way, made his angry face much more angry, and his thick veins much thicker. Even as we read the description, the sense of terror the boys felt at the approach of this fiery blusterer becomes manifest in us as well. Uriah Heep's hands are damp and cold; we experience a loathing for the creature at the very outset, as though we were faced by a snake. Small things? Externals? Yes, but they invariably are such as to recoil upon the soul. At times he describes a trait which is no more than a crotchet, but he makes it live, makes it pervade the character, setting that character in motion as if a series of strings were animating a marionette. Again, a man or a woman is indirectly made plainer to us by a detailed account of a companion—man, bird, or beast. We learn more of Pickwick from the study of Sam Weller, of Dora from Jip, of Barnaby from his raven, of Kit from Whisker, the rough-coated pony. Here the originals are reflected in their grotesque shadows.

Dickens's characters, then, appeal to the senses more than to the intellect or the emotions. To the eye, they are clear-cut; but to the inner vision, sometimes, they seem vague; and their effect on our feelings is apt to be disproportionately small. When we call to mind a character from Balzac or Dostoeffsky, Père Goriot or Raskolnikoff let us say, their very names give rise to an emotional response; we remember the self-sacrifice of the former, and the despairing chaos of passion in the latter. But mention the word Pickwick, and the mental eye is immediately presented with a jovial old gentleman, his embonpoint well accentuated, gilt buttons on his coat. We fancy we are contemplating a painting in oils when we call to mind a Dickens

character, whereas with Balzac and Dostoeffsky the effect is more like that of listening to music. For the Frenchman and the Russian create, whereas the Englishman reproduces. Dickens does not discern the souls of his characters where they rise out of the night of the unconscious, where their being is exclusively spiritual; he perceives the immaterial fluid in the region where it comes into touch with the world, he fixes his gaze on the thousandfold workings of the mind on the body—but none of these escape him. His imagination is physical, visual, and is, therefore, only competent to deal with the emotions and types appertaining to the earthly sphere; his people have plasticity and vitality only in the temperate region of normal emotion. As soon as we enter the torrid zone of the passions, the drama melts like wax and becomes mere sentimentality; or it gets petrified into hatred, and shows conspicuous flaws. The most successful of his types are the perfectly straightforward ones; he is not happy in his depiction of those far more interesting natures which stand on the borderland of good and evil, which have elements of the divine intermingling with the satanic. That is why there is a certain measure of justification for the frequent criticism that in Dickens's books, as on the Day of Judgment, all men and women must be classed as "good" or "bad," and herded unhesitatingly with the sheep or the goats. The assertion is unduly facile, and exceptions will present themselves to the mind of any intelligent and sympathetic reader. Still, it is true that as a student of character Dickens simplifies unduly. His methods never lead him along the path which runs away into the world of mysterious interconnexions, and of mystical chains of events. Thither his genius might have led him, had not he been dragged back, ever and again, by the force of the national

tradition! It is the tragedy of his life, as it is the explanation of his success, that he is constrained to walk along the beaten track, his feet firmly planted on the earth; forced to dwell in the corporeal, the comprehensible, the comfortable environment of bourgeois existence.

DICKENS AS MELODRAMATIST AND MORALIST

I HAVE described Dickens as "content," yet in a sense he was never satisfied with his work. He was famous—but he had not won his fame as a writer of tragedy. With ever-renewed spirit he sought to rise to tragic levels, and time after time he merely attained to melodrama. The frontier line of his powers was clearly drawn. His attempts to cross it were invariably lamentable. English readers may find *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Bleak House* works of high creative power; for Continentals they are damned, because the great moments in them are forced. And yet the author's endeavour to be genuinely tragical is commendable: he heaps plot upon plot; he overwhelms his heroes with catastrophes as crushing as rock-falls; he calls the terrors of rainy nights to his aid; he brings in mob riots and revolution, lets loose all the furies of horror and disaster. But the reader experiences no more than a slight shiver down the back; a purely physical reflex, not the shudder of the soul. We are never profoundly shaken while reading his books; their storms do not wreak havoc in our souls so that from sheer agony of tension the heart yearns for the lightning to flash forth and in the crash of thunder to find release. Dickens confronts us with peril after peril; yet we are in no way alarmed. When we read Dostoeffsky we sometimes gasp for breath as an abyss of disaster suddenly opens at our feet; one feels this terrific chasm, so dark and fathomless,

as if it were gaping in one's own breast. The earth seems to be slipping from under the feet; one is seized with giddiness, a giddiness strangely woven of fire and sweetness; one longs to plunge headlong into the void, and yet one shudders at uncanny feelings of pleasure and pain, heated to such a white heat that they are almost impossible to differentiate. True, in Dickens likewise, we meet with abysses. He fills them with gloom, he depicts their dangers—and yet the shudder does not come; one does not get the thrill of that plunge into fathomless depths, that feeling which is perhaps the climax of artistic enjoyment. We are always safe with Dickens, as if we were holding a banister, for we know beforehand that he will not let us fall; we know that the hero will not come to grief in the end; the twin angels, compassion and justice, who are never absent from the skies of this English author, will see to it that he comes scatheless through all his troubles. Dickens does not possess the brutality essential to give a writer courage to tackle the really great tragedies of life. He is not heroic, but sentimental. Tragedy is a will to defiance; sentimentality is a longing for tears. Dickens was never able to reach the shores where dwell the tearless, wordless, ultimate powers of despairing pain. The extremest feeling he is able to arouse is one of gentle sympathy, as over the death of Dora in *David Copperfield*. Even when he has summoned up mightier emotions, he invariably calms the storm by pouring the oil (often rancid!) of compassion upon the waves. The traditional sentimentality of the English novel curbs his flight towards the magnificent. For in England, the events taking place in a novel must serve to illustrate the current moral code; and at that time the burden of the song of destiny was: "Always be true and straightforward!" We come back

to our sheep and our goats. The finale must be a last judgment wherein the good shall rise to glory everlasting, and the bad go down to eternal punishment. Unfortunately Dickens could not withstand this trend: his rogues get drowned, or kill one another; the proud and wealthy are ruined; the hero sits cosily at home by the fire. Even today, the English find it hard to tolerate real drama, unless in the end it leaves them with the pleasant feeling that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. This typically Victorian hypertrophy of the moral sense is responsible for the fact that Dickens's grandest and noblest inspirations fall flat, that he is never able to give us a tragedy in the sublimest sense of the word.

The philosophy underlying his works, the philosophy which is built into their very foundations and upon which their entire architectural strength depends, is not the philosophy of a free artist but that of an Anglican citizen. Dickens claps a censorship on to the emotions, instead of allowing them free vent; he does not, as does Balzac, permit them to overflow their banks, but guides them through locks and channels and dykes where they turn the mills of the bourgeois moral code. Parsons, preachers, common-sense philosophers, schoolmasters, and the like, seem to be looking over his shoulder as he composes; each has a finger in the pie; they prevail upon him to make his novel an example and a warning to the young people of his day, instead of letting him develop his ideas along the lines of an unfettered reality. He submitted—and he got his reward. When he died, the Bishop of Winchester declared with pride that Dickens's works could unhesitatingly be placed in the hands of any child. But this is what detracts from his achievement, this is what cuts the glory from his magnif-

icent gifts—the fact that his books do not describe life as it really is, but only as a bishop would like to have it presented to children! For any but the English, these novels are too abundantly larded with moral reflections and sermon-stuff. To fulfil Dickens's conception of a hero, one must be an embodiment of virtue. His is a puritanical ideal. Fielding and Smollett, Englishmen too, but sons of a cheerfully sensuous generation, were not at all alarmed when one of their heroes smashed another man's nose at a jollification, or when, in spite of an ardent affection for an exalted dame, they occasionally chose to sleep with her abigail. But Dickens does not permit even his villains to perpetuate such indecencies. His very debauchees are careful not to misbehave in a way that would bring the blush to a spinster's cheek as she sits reading the story at her cosy hearthside. Dick Swiveller is a libertine? Yes, but in what consists his "libertinage"? He puts away four glasses of ale instead of two, is not quite to be trusted when he is adding up his accounts, loafs now and then instead of attending strictly to business —and that is about all. In the end, and just at the opportune moment, he comes into a legacy (a very small one, of course), and in a highly respectable fashion marries the lass who has helped him along the path of virtue. Dickens cannot make even his "goats" genuinely rascally, genuinely immoral; their blood runs pale despite their evil instincts. This pretence that there is no such thing as a life of the senses unalloyed, brands the whole of his work; squint-eyed hypocrisy, which pretends not to see what it does not want to see, turns Dickens's penetrating eyes away from reality. The England of the Victorian era was to blame for the circumstance that this great writer never wrote the tragedy of which his talents were capable, and

which, in very truth, he secretly yearned to write. Inevitably he would have been dragged down into the prevailing mediocrity, his popularity would have debased him to become the advocate of his contemporaries' mendacity where sexual morals were concerned, had it not been for a world whither his creative aspirations could flee for sanctuary, had he not been equipped with silvery pinions which enabled him to soar above the mean, dull levels of expediency, had he not been endowed with such an inexhaustible, serene, almost unearthly sense of humour.

A LAND OF CHILDHOOD

This halcyon world, into which the fogs of the island realm could not penetrate, was the land of childhood. English discretion blinked at the life of carnal desires, forcing the adult sons and daughters of Britain to assume a virtue if they had it not. But children could still, like their primal parents in the Garden of Eden, give simple expression to their feelings; they were not yet "English," but little beautiful human flowers; the mist-wreaths of British hypocrisy had not yet obscured their skies. In this realm, where Dickens was free to do as he liked, unhampered by the dictates of his Victorian conscience, he accomplished imperishable things. The parts of his books where he is describing the years of childhood are invariably beautiful. I do not believe that these figures can ever fall into oblivion, nor will those merry and serious episodes of youthful days ever be forgotten. Who, indeed, could forget Little Nell's wanderings when, with her old grandfather, she has shaken the dust of London off her feet, and has set forth in search of green fields, leaving the army of bricks and mortar behind? Innocent and gentle, her angel smile carries her over dangers and obstacles until death brings release. We are deeply moved by this child's story; our emotion far transcends sentimentality, for it awakens the most genuine and lively of all human feelings. Then there is Traddles, a plump and cheerful rascal in his tight sky-blue suit that makes his arms and legs like rolypoly puddings, who con-

soles himself for being caned by drawing skeletons all over his slate; and Kit, the loyalest of loyal souls; and little Nickleby; and that other youngster who is constantly cropping up, the pretty boy, so small and not always very kindly treated, who is none other than Charles Dickens himself, the poet who has made his own childish sorrows and childish joys imperishable as none other before or since. He is never weary of telling us about this humiliated, forsaken, alarmed, and dreamy child, orphaned at a tender age; and when he pulls out the pathetic stop in this instance, he moves us readily to tears, for his sonorous voice is full-toned, and rich as a bell in its vibrations. These scenes of childhood's days which Dickens lavishes upon us in the pages of his novels can never be forgotten. They are woven of laughter and of tears, sublimity and ridiculousness, combining to form a rainbow which gladdens the skies. The exalted merges with the sentimental, tragedy with comedy, truth with fiction, till they form something new and strange. Here he rises superior to what is English and earthly; here Dickens knows no limitations to his greatness; here he is incomparable. Should ever an adequate monument be raised to his memory, around the bronze statue there should be grouped marble figures representing the children he has conceived, dancing and capering and weeping by the side of him who was a champion, a father, and a brother to them all. For he loved them as the purest incarnations of the human essence. Whenever he wanted his characters to make a special appeal to our hearts, he fashioned them simple as children. For the children's sakes he even loved those who were not childlike but childish, the feeble-minded and the mentally deranged. In many of his novels he introduces one of these pure fools, whose poor wits soar far above the

heads of ordinary cares and woes, to whom life offers no problems, or tasks, or troubles, to whom life seems nothing but a happy, wholly incomprehensible yet beautiful game. It is touching to follow the delicacy of his portrayal of such daft souls. He takes them by the hand as though they were invalids, and weaves a garland of goodness around their heads, crowning them as it were with an aureole. They are sacred to him, because they for ever inhabit the paradise of childhood.

And childhood, for Dickens, is paradise. Whenever I read one of Dickens's novels I am filled with forebodings of the day when his children shall grow up for I know that the sweetest thing will then pass away, irrevocably; soon his imaginative fervour will be chilled by the conventionalities of his day, pristine truth will be overlaid with English falsehood. What is more, he appears to share my feeling of dread. For he is reluctant to launch his darlings into life; and he never guides them onward into adulthood where they would become commonplace, jaded elders. He bids them farewell as soon as he has led them to the altar, to marriage; when all perils have been overcome, and they have entered the quiet haven of a comfortable existence. And the child he loved best of all, Little Nell, who was for him the reincarnation of a being prematurely wrenched from his side and whose loss he was never able completely to get over, Little Nell was not allowed to pass into the world of disappointment and lies. He kept her back in the paradise of childhood, early closed her sweet, blue eyes, allowed her all unawares to pass from the bright spring sunshine into the darkness of death, a seraphic smile upon her face. He loved her too dearly to abandon her to the world of reality.

For this world of reality, as I have already insisted, is a middle-class world, filled to satiety and desiring its ease and its comforts—is no more than a tiny, self-sufficient particle of the enormous possibilities life holds in store. A world so poverty-stricken as England then was (in the spiritual sense) could become rich only thanks to the advent of an overmastering emotion. Balzac made his bourgeois mighty by the power of hate; Dostoeffsky imparted strength to his world by a redeeming love. Dickens, too, great artist that he was, saved his people from the crushing burden of an earthly, all-too-earthly existence; he redeemed them by the sunshine of his humour. He contemplated this petty-bourgeois society of his with indulgence, but did not ascribe to it any objective importance, nor did he intone a hymn to all these worthy folk in praise of their sterling though humdrum qualities—a hymn of praise which, alas, very many German authors seem to think it their duty to sing. Dickens good-humouredly chaffed his compatriots for their foibles, making them, as Gottfried Keller and Wilhelm Raabe did for the German world of their day, just a trifle ludicrous, they and their Lilliputian cares and worries. But he made fun of them in a friendly and forbearing way, so that with all their faults and follies they remained eminently lovable.

This humour floods his work with sunshine, making his

modest landscapes resplendent and cheerful and unendingly attractive, full of wonder and delight. In this genial blaze, everything assumes an air of probability, even the false tears shine like diamonds, and the poor little passions glow as if they were genuine conflagrations. The quality of Dickens's humour lifts his work out of time, and places it in eternity. We are released from the tedium of the purely English atmosphere; and the essential hypocrisy of the British code is conquered by laughter. Like another Ariel, this sprightly humour hovers over all his books, filling them with homely melodies, drawing them into a merry dance, pervading them with an immense joy of life. It is never absent for long. Even in the underground darkness of trouble and disorder it shines steady and clear like a miner's lamp; it discharges the overwrought tensions; it mitigates the excessive sentimentality by a gentle undertone of satire and irony; softens exaggeration by its shadowed presence; it is the reconciler, the adjuster; it constitutes what is imperishable in Dickens's works.

As with Dickens's other qualities, this humour of his is typically English. There is nothing of the sensuous about it; it never forgets its manners; never gets drunk on its own high spirits; is never vicious or debauched. Even at the height of the amusement, the humour is not allowed to overleap the bounds of decorum, to spit venom or belch grossness as with Rabelais, to assume the sardonic vein and turn somersaults of wild enjoyment as with Cervantes, or to spring up into the realm of the impossible as with the Americans. Dickens's humour always observes the decencies, always keeps its head. Like most of his compatriots, Dickens laughs only with his mouth. His merriment does not rush upward in a roaring flame; it is, rather, radiant in

texture, suffusing warmth and light throughout every vein of the body; it brightens up into a thousand little tongues of fire, will-o'-the-wisps, teasing elves and imps, ravishing rogues amid the hard facts of everyday life.

It was inscribed on the tablets of Dickens's destiny that he should never pass beyond the limits of the halfway house, should never leave the middle road of safety. So his humour, too, conforms to the decrees of fate. It takes its place happily between the uproarious extreme of ribald and mocking laughter and the coldly cynical extreme of the satirist's superior smile. He had not his like among any of his great compatriots in the world of letters. Swift's caustic, disintegrating irony, Fielding's broad and merciless ridicule, were not in his vein; he did not turn the iron in people's wounds as did Thackeray. His laughter always does one good; it never hurts, is never splenetic, but plays around one like dappled sunshine. He neither wants to point a moral, nor to be sarcastic, nor, donning the fool's cap and bells, to hint at something solemn and earnest underlying his jokes and merriment. In fact, he desires nothing at all. He exists. He travels through life aimlessly and complacently, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, burlesquing the world as he goes, giving the people he encounters those diverting masks and queer lovable personalities we meet at every turn in his books, and thereby brightening the existence of millions here below. Everything that enters his circle of light seems to be lit up by his own radiance; even his rapscallions are redeemed by humour; the universe itself wants to laugh when Dickens glances at it merrily. Everything is asparkle and aglitter, and thus is eminently grateful to a people whose skies are so often shrouded and grey.

THE STYLIST, THE COMFORTER, AND THE CONSOLER

And his style! The words turn head over heels, the sentences twirl and whirl in and out of one another, leap aside, play hide-and-seek with the meaning, hurl questions at one another, tease, lead one another astray, caper and prance in an unending and sprightly galliard. And pervading it all, this unappeasable humour. Even without the salt of sexuality the dish is amazingly good in savour—and of course English prudery forbade the use of that condiment! Fever, and poverty, and vexation might do their worst with him, yet Dickens could not but write in merry mood. His humour is irresistible, it winks at us from his beautiful, alert eyes, and was only quenched at last when the flame of life was extinguished. No earthly might can prevail against it, nor will time dim its radiance. For I cannot imagine anyone whose heart is proof against that love-inspiring tale *The Cricket on the Hearth*, or who can withstand the gaiety of numberless episodes in Dickens's books. Spiritual needs and literary tastes may change; but so long as pleasant, cheerful thoughts are wanted, in moments when it is wise to take things easy for a while and to allow the waters of life to drift refreshingly about us, at times when the mind longs for nothing so much as to find relaxation in an innocent, melodious stirring of the emotions—then it is that one's hand will instinctively reach out for these books, not only in the British Isles, but the wide world over.

That is what gives the quality of greatness to Dickens's books, earth-bound though they be: they have sunshine within, and the rays strike outward, warming all who come into contact with them. Great works of art must not be judged by their intensity alone, nor by the human types that stand out against the background: they need, likewise, to be appraised by their extensity, and their effect upon the mass of mankind. Of Dickens we can say, and of him alone among literary geniuses of the nineteenth century, that he increased the joyousness of the world. How many millions of eyes have wept over his books? How many hearts whence laughter had faded or been blotted out have seen the seed blossoming anew under the fertilizing sun of his mirth! His influence extended far beyond the realm of literature. The wealthy, rueful and ashamed, left money for charitable foundations after reading about the Brothers Cheeryble; the sour-minded and crabbed became kindlier in disposition; we may vouch for it that children running wild in the streets were oftener the recipients of coppers after *Oliver Twist* began to appear; government took upon itself to improve workhouse conditions, and to have private schools inspected from time to time, to put an end to gross abuses. Pity and charity have grown more abundantly in England because Dickens lived and wrote; and that the harsh fate of countless poor and unhappy wretches has been mitigated is largely due to him.

I can hear some protesting: "But such considerations are absolutely beside the point, when the æsthetic value of a work of art is up for judgment." Granted! Nevertheless they, too, have their importance, for they show that a great work of art not only has pinions wherewith to fly beyond this temporal world into the universe of the imagination

there to give free rein to the soaring flight of the creative will, but also can bring about profound changes in the world of reality as well. And such changes in the visible, the actual, are the reflexion of a change in the emotional atmosphere. Unlike the men of letters who are self-seeking, who ask for sympathy and consolation, Dickens was a bountiful giver. Dickens poured out compassion and cheerfulness upon his contemporaries, thereby enhancing their serenity of mind and their pleasure, and stimulating the blood to course more swiftly through their veins. The world is the brighter for his passage; there is more jollity abroad since the day when the youthful stenographer gave up recording other people's words in the Houses of Parliament and determined to strike out for himself and to describe men and their destinies. Thus was he enabled to cherish joy and keep happiness alive; and thus was he enabled to bequeath to later generations the record of an England that could once more be "Merrie England" in the days between the nightmare of the Napoleonic wars and the disturbing visions of modern imperialism. The years will come and go, but still mankind will look back at the world Dickens depicted, a world growing old-fashioned and out-of-date even as he wrote, a world still full of strange trades now for ever passed away into the mists of time and ground to powder in the mills of industrialism; and this world will continue to be fresh and living, innocent, and filled with a simple, quiet serenity.

Dickens's imagination created the idyll of England: that is his finest achievement. This peacefulness and content must not be depreciated by a comparison with mightier deeds in the world of letters: for idylls, too, are immortal, and from immemorial days have come and gone among us.

"Georgics" or "Bucolics," poems written by men who have fled from the horrors of desire in order to find rest, are perpetually recurring; and as the generations are born anew and are replaced by yet other generations, these idylls will arise again, undying and ever young. They come in the pause between excitements, when mankind is gathering up its forces for another plunge; they give a breathing-space of quiet satisfaction to the overworked heart. Some writers are called upon to create strength; others, to create stillness and quietude. Charles Dickens came to bring a few moments' idyllic peace to the world. Today, life is full of noise; the roar of machines perpetually deafens our ears; time flies on rapid wings. But the idyll will never die, because it is of the very essence of the joy in life; it returns as the birds return in the springtime, it comforts us like the blue sky after storm; cheerfulness ever recurs after the most painful crises and convulsions of the soul. Thus, too, will Dickens come again and again into his own, no matter how long he may have suffered eclipse and been forgotten; he will always be a present refuge in time of trouble, when the human heart craves for joyfulness, and when, shattered by the strain of the passions' tragedies, it turns to the quiet things of life in order to catch the strains of the poet's minstrelsy.

In your lack of power to finish anything lies the secret of your greatness.
GOETHE

Dostoeffsky

1821–1880

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THE EXPLORATION OF A NEW COSMOS

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies . . .

KEATS

It is a difficult task, one full of responsibility, to write worthily of Fedor Mihailovich Dostoeffsky, and to set forth adequately all he signifies for the inner life of the contemporary world. Indeed, the breadth and the power of this one individual demand from us a new standard of measurement.

Approaching him as we should approach another, we expect to find a circumscribed imaginative work, the creation of a man subject to the ordinary limitations; instead, we are confronted with boundless expanses, with a cosmos having its own circling stars and making its own music of the spheres. Discouragement overwhelms the voyager into these realms: his first experience of their magic is too alien, the range of their ideas is too vast, their message is too exotic, to permit him to gaze undazzled into their heavens and feast his eyes as he does on more familiar skies. To be fully appreciated, Dostoeffsky must be lived from within. We must probe our own powers of sympathy and compassion to the depths, we must attune our hearts to a fresh and enhanced sensibility, we must delve down to the roots of our being, if we would discover the correlations between our own nature and human nature as envisaged by Dostoeff-

sky—for at first we think his conception fantastical, to learn in the end that it is amazingly true to life. We can only hope to make ourselves bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh if we have the courage to fathom to the lowest abysses of our personality, to penetrate to what is eternal and unchangeable in our essence, to search out the ultimate fibrils of our innermost self.

How strange this Russian countryside seems at the first approach; a careless glance, and the steppe of Dostoeffsky's homeland would appear a pathless waste, remote and having little kinship with the familiar scenes of the west. No friendly contours are there to caress the eye; rarely does a suave hour invite the traveller to repose. A twilight scarred with lightning-flashes and fraught with mystery encompassing the senses alternates with an extreme of frost and ice which clarifies the mind; no warm, bright sunshine to fill sky and earth with gladness, but the northern lights flaming blood-red athwart the heavens. We are confronted with a primeval landscape, a magic world of Dostoeffsky's own creation; pregnant with manifold experience, and yet at the same time virginal. A tremor seizes us, a tremor not wholly unpleasant, as if we were approaching the everlasting elements. Before long our mood prompts us to linger, giving our admiration rein; and yet a boding knowledge informs us that here is no region wherein we may make ourselves at home for ever; soon we have to return to our own warmer and friendlier, though maybe narrower, world. Shame assails us as we realize that this iron landscape is too great for everyday contemplation; the alternations from an icy to an ardent atmosphere and back again make it hard to draw breath. The spirit might well quail before the majesty of so much horror,

were it not that, above the tragic welter, an unending expanse of goodness is spread, starry and serene; the selfsame skies enclosing the world we know, but higher, more spacious, more intellectually sharp and glacial, than those which form the canopy over our gentler zones. Only when reassured by an upward glance from earth to the skies above, can we attain infinite consolation for the infinite passion of the human lot, perceiving greatness ambushed in the horror, divinity hidden in the gloom.

Such a glance into the empyrean is alone capable of transforming into an ardent love the awe which inspires us when contemplating Dostoeffsky's work; only by a searching penetration into his unique qualities can we gain a clear understanding of the profound sense of brotherhood and the all-embracing humanity which permeate the life and writings of this mighty Russian. But how labyrinthine are the ways into his heart! Vast is the expanse, dread are the horizons, that open up before our vision; and as we pass from the limitless immensity into the unfathomed depths, the work of the master becomes more and more enigmatic. It is, indeed, saturated with mystery. Each character beckons us down into the daimonic abysses of the terrestrial, or swings us heavenward to God's very throne. Behind each division of his work, each face of his creations, each fold of his disguise, there broods eternal night or shines eternal day: for life and destiny have decreed that Dostoeffsky shall be kin to all the mysteries of existence. His universe hangs betwixt death and madness, dreams and sharp-cut reality. His personal problem is incessantly colliding with the insoluble problem of all mankind; every shining surface reflects immortality. As a man, as an imaginative writer, as a Russian, as a political propagandist, as a prophet, no

matter the aspect under which we consider him, his whole personality irradiates eternal purpose. No road leads to the goal of his being, no question ever allows us to penetrate to the ultimate recesses of his heart. Enthusiasm alone is permitted to approach him; and even enthusiasm must be modest and unassuming, must appear less ardent than our author's own loving reverence before the mystery of mankind.

Dostoeffsky never holds out a hand to help us approach him. Other master builders of our day have revealed their intentions. Wagner gave us, in addition to his work, a prefatory explanation and a polemical defence; Tolstoy flung the doors of everyday life wide, he accosted those who came to inquire and encouraged the curious. But Dostoeffsky only allows us to examine his finished work; the outline sketches which might have enlightened us as to his motives have been consumed in the fires of creation. Silent and shy, he passed on his way through life, and we are hardly given a glimpse even at the outward and physical facts of his existence. It was only during his youth that he could boast of having friends: as a grown man he was a solitary, for he considered he would detract from his love of humanity as a whole if he were to show marked affection for any one individual. His very letters (save perhaps those to Anna Grigorevna), when they voice complaints and utter cries of distress, betray no more than the general stringency of his life, disclose no more than the dumb pangs of a tortured body. As far as an individual appeal is concerned, his lips are closed. Whole years of his childhood are submerged in the shadows. Though there are many living today who have beheld him in the flesh, yet as a man he has already become intangible and aloof; a legend

is growing up around his name, he has acquired the lineaments of a hero and a saint. The twilight of mingled fact and fancy which obscures as much as it illuminates the mortal integument of Homer or Dante or Shakespeare, does the same service to that of Dostoeffsky, giving unearthly lustre to his traits. We cannot hope to write of his destiny if we rely on information gleaned from concrete documents: love alone, love informed with knowledge, must be our guide.

Unaided and undirected must we betake ourselves into the labyrinth of this soul; our only clue, a loving heart freed from the thraldom of earthly passion. The farther we venture on our way, the more aware do we become of our own selves; and it is only when we have attained to a realization of our common kinship with universal humanity, that we really draw near the master. One who knows himself well, knows Dostoeffsky well; for if any man has succeeded in realizing the quintessence of all things human, it is surely he. The road to an understanding of his work leads through the purgatory of the passions, through the hell of tribulation, through every realm of human torment: torment of man and of mankind; torment of the artist; and the ultimate, most agonizing torment of all, the torment of one who is tormented by God himself. The way is dark: if we are not to lose the trail we must light it from the fires within, fanning them to a blaze by our passionate desire for truth. We must first explore the intricacies of our own personality, before hazarding ourselves into his. He sends no herald to lead us forward. Nor has he any means of testifying his presence, save the artist's mystical trinity of flesh and spirit: his countenance, his destiny, and his work.

LIKENESS

Dostoeffsky's face is the face of a peasant. An ashen hue pervades the hollow cheeks, making them appear almost grimy, emphasizing the furrows caused by many years of suffering; the skin, dry and parched, is stretched tight over the bony framework, and is bereft of blood and colour, sucked clean of life by the vampire which has preyed on it for a score of years. To right and left, two huge boulders jut forth, the prominent cheek-bones typical of his race; a sparse moustache and a straggling beard veil the sad-looking mouth and delicate chin. Earth, rock, and forest; a tragical and primitive landscape; such are the basic lineaments of Dostoeffsky's countenance. All is dark and pre-eminently earthly in this unbeautiful face. I have called it a peasant's, but I might almost term it a beggar's, so flat and colourless is it, so lacking in brightness: a piece of the Russian steppe cast high and dry upon the stones. Even the deep-set eyes, gleaming from within their sockets, are incapable of imparting a spark of light to the grim visage, for their radiance is directed inward. As soon as the lids close over them, the face becomes a death-mask, and the nervous tension which otherwise grips the frail features is relaxed into a lifeless lethargy.

The first feeling we are aware of as we look is repulsion. This initial sensation is gradually replaced by one of growing fascination and admiration; for, crowning the narrow, peasant face, there rises the dome of the forehead,

gleaming white above the dark shadows; sculptured marble dominating the clay of the fleshly tenement and the scraggy wilderness of beard. All the shafts of light stream upwards in this face; our gaze becomes absorbed in the broad and kingly brow to the exclusion of the rest; and as the years pass by, and age and illness work havoc among the features, the brow acquires a growing lustre and irradiates light far and wide. It stands like the heavens, high and unassailable, above the body wasted by illness, a glorious symbol of the triumph of the spirit over earthly misery. Nowhere does this triumph find better expression than in the mask which was taken when Dostoeffsky lay dead, his lids loosely blotting out the agonized eyes, his pale fingers gripping the poor little wooden cross which a compassionate peasant woman had given him in the days of his penal servitude. In this cast, the forehead shines forth over the soulless countenance like the rising sun over a benighted landscape, revealing to us the selfsame message that is enshrined in Dostoeffsky's works: spirit and faith have delivered him from the trammels of life on earth. His greatness seems to increase as we penetrate deeper into his being; and never is his face more expressive than it is in death.

TRAGEDY OF HIS LIFE

Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa.
DANTE

As I have already said, the first feeling we are aware of as we approach Dostoeffsky is one of repulsion: but this is followed by a realization of his greatness. His fate, too, at first sight appears both terrible and commonplace; it seems to corroborate the message of his face, to be peasantlike and ordinary. At the outset we cannot but deem his life one long and senseless martyrdom. Poverty robbed him of the sweetness of youth and the peaceful security of old age; pain bored into his vitals and privation wasted his frame; his limbs twitched under the impact of his glowing nerves; his passions were ceaselessly fanned by gusts of desire. No torment is spared him; he escapes no martyrdom. The Erinyes seem to hunt him with remorseless enmity. Yet when we look back upon his life we realize that fate was harsh because something perdurable had to be hammered out of this mortal, that fate made use of violence because it had to overpower a force as mighty as itself. Dostoeffsky did not tread the smooth highway along which other great writers of the nineteenth century were allowed to travel; he was the sport of destiny, the antagonist of a god whose caprice it was to measure forces with the strongest. We must go back to the annals of the Old Testament, to the days of the heroes, before we can find anything comparable to Dostoeffsky's lot. There is nothing modern about it, nor

is there any trace of middle-class comforts and amenities in the story of his pilgrimage. He has, like Jacob, to wrestle with the angel of the Lord; he has, like Job, to rebel against God even while abasing himself before the Eternal. He is never allowed to be sure of himself, never granted a leisure hour, for he must always be aware of the presence of the Almighty who chastens him in sign of loving kindness. Not for a moment may he rest in peace and happiness, for the road upon which he travels leads away into the world without end. It would seem, at times, as if the genii that governed his life had relented, and were about to permit the victim of their wrath to amble quietly along the common highway; but ere he sets foot upon it and can rub shoulders with his fellow-mortals, the hand of the avenger is upon him, thrusting him back into the burning bush. He is raised aloft, only that he may fall the deeper into the pit: thus shall he learn the extremes of ecstasy and of despair. He is caught up to the highest altitudes of hope where weaker vessels perish in voluptuousness, and cast down into the abyss of passion where others are shattered by suffering. Like Job, once more, he is constantly being crushed at the very moment when he feels most secure; he is bereft of wife and children; he is afflicted with illness, despised and scorned, that he may ceaselessly justify his actions before God, and, by perpetual rebellion and unquenchable hope, bear fresh witness to his undying devotion. It would seem as if, in this lukewarm age, one man had been singled out to testify to the world that titanic possibilities of pleasure and pain are still open to us; this one man was Dostoeffsky, through whose being the mighty Will streamed like a torrent. His poor, sick body might writhe convulsively, his sufferings might be poignantly voiced in a letter now and

again; but the momentary revolt was instantly quelled by the spirit and by faith. The mystic in Dostoeffsky, the sage in him, recognized the hand that was afflicting him, and he realized the tragical and terrible meaning of his fate. Through his passion, love was turned to pain: he has tinged his epoch and his universe with the witting ardour of his torment.

Thrice does life swing him aloft, only to toss him down again. He is still quite a young man when fame beckons: his very first book makes his name widely known; but almost at once he sinks back into oblivion, undergoing imprisonment, and penal servitude (katorga) in Siberia. Emerging once more from obscurity, he takes Russia by storm with the publication of *The House of the Dead*. The tsar sheds tears over the book; Young Russia rallies round him. Dostoeffsky founds a periodical, and his words reach the whole Russian people: some of his great novels appear. Whereupon his material existence suffers shipwreck, he is scourged with debts and worries, and hunted forth from his native land; illness bites into his flesh; he becomes a nomad, wandering through Europe, forgotten of his own people. Then, after years of labour and privation, he rises once more to the surface of the grey waters of poverty and neglect: his speech at the Pushkin festival proves him a supreme master of his craft, and the prophet of his homeland. Henceforward the star of his fame is to set no more. But now another hand is raised to crush him; death deals him the final blow, and it is only round his coffin that the waves of popular enthusiasm surge. Fate has nothing more to ask of him; the cruel though omniscient Will has got all it wants out of him, has extracted the most precious of in-

tellectual fruits: contemptuously, the empty husk of the body is flung on to the dust-heap.

Such wanton cruelty it was which made Dostoeffsky's life at once a work of art and a tragedy. His achievement as an artist is symbolical of his whole existence, in that it assumes the typical form assumed by his own destiny. We find therein strange coincidences and identities and mysterious reflexions which elude demonstration or explanation. Even his birth was symbolical, for Fedor Mihailovich Dostoeffsky was born in the lodge of a workhouse infirmary. In the first hour, his place in the world is indicated to him: he is to be apart, among the rejected, with the dregs of life; he is to be closely acquainted with suffering, sorrow, and death. Not even at the last (for he died in one of the poorer quarters of Petersburg, in a mean street, and in a little fourth-story room) is he to escape the sordid; during the fifty-nine years of his sojourn on earth he remains on terms of intimacy with misery, poverty, illness, and privation; he never quits the workhouse of life.

The strictness of his upbringing encouraged his inborn tendency to brooding. His first years were spent in the atmosphere of the Moscow workhouse infirmary, where he shared a tiny room with his brother. It seems absurd to speak of "childhood" in his connexion, for everything that is relevant to childhood was excluded in little Fedor's case. Dostoeffsky himself never mentions this period, for his pride made him unwilling to seek sympathy. A grey blank occupies that portion of his biography where luckier poets' eyes are filled wth laughing and many-hued visions, with tender memories and sweet regret. Yet we may learn much of the early years by looking into the burning eyes of the

children he created in his works. He must have resembled Kolya in *The Brothers Karamazoff*, the lad whose fanciful imaginings bordered on hallucination, who was filled with a fluctuating desire to become great, and who was swayed by a precocious, yet powerful yearning to outgrow himself and "to suffer for the whole of mankind." His heart must have been like a chalice brimful and running over with love, but burdened with a hysterical anxiety lest he betray himself, like little Netyoshka. Again, may we not catch a glimpse of Dostoeffsky's own features in his portrait of Ilyuchka, the son of a drunken captain, who suffered so much shame on account of his poverty-stricken home life, and nevertheless was ever on the alert in defence of his kin?

By the time he stepped forth from this dreary world, his childhood was over and done with. He took refuge in the world of books, that everlasting sanctuary for all those who are dissatisfied and slighted. It is a variegated world, full of perils. He and his brother spent many a night and many a day in reading the same books. Already at that time he was insatiable where his inclinations were concerned, so that even the most innocent impulse was intensified to a vice. Though he is filled with enthusiasm for humanity at large, yet he is morbidly shy and reserved, simultaneously fire and ice, obsessed by a craving for solitude. He gropes aimlessly amid the passions, explores every by-way of the cellarage wherein his spirit dwells during these youthful years, always alone and filled with disgust in the midst of pleasure, always oppressed by a sense of guilt while tasting of happiness, always with grimly set lips. He spends a few dull years in the School of Engineers; they are dull because he makes no friends—and because he is kept on

short allowance among those who have money to burn. Like the heroes in his books, he lives the life of a hermit, passing his days adreaming, deep in meditation, his only company the secret burden of thought and of speculation. At present he sees no way opening up as an outlet to his ambition; he is on the watch over himself and sits in his lair incubating his powers. With mingled voluptuousness and horror, he feels that they are germinating, deep down; he loves them, and at the same time he fears them; he is afraid even to move lest he should mar these obscure and delicate processes. For several years he remains in this larval state of solitude and silence; he becomes hypochondriacal, is seized with a mystical longing for death, is often overwhelmed with terror of the outer world and of himself, and shudders as he contemplates the chaos in his own breast. In order to provide for his immediate wants, he spends the nights translating Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* and Schiller's *Don Carlos;* characteristically enough, the money thus earned is soon spent in the satisfaction of contradictory inclinations: almsgiving and excesses. From the murky squalor of these days something slowly emerges and takes definite shape; at last, out of the visionary and crowded state of alternating anxiety and ecstasy, there is born the first fruit of his imagination, the novel, *Poor Folk.*

It was in 1844, when the author was twenty-four years of age, that this masterly study was written, a study of human nature by the most lonesome of men, composed "with passionate ardour, nay, almost with tears." His poverty, the fountain-head of his humiliation, was responsible for its genesis; his greatest asset, love of suffering, an endless capacity for suffering with others, gave the work its blessing. Dostoeffsky contemplated the pages uneasily. He

suspected they contained a question asked of fate, the answer to which might mean something decisive to his career. It was only after mature reflection that he made up his mind to submit the manuscript to Nekrasoff.

Two days go by without a sign. Brooding and alone, Dostoeffsky sits at home working on into the night until the lamp burns low. At four in the morning, comes an urgent ringing at the door. He goes to open. Nekrasoff is there, flings his arms round the young author's neck, is loud in his jubilations. He and a friend have read the manuscript together, all night they have been at it, laughing and weeping. At last they can resist the impulse no longer, they feel they must come and hug him.

That door-bell ringing in the night is the first vital experience in Dostoeffsky's life; it summons him to fame. The friends continue to rejoice together until the morning is well advanced. Then Nekrasoff hurries off to find Belinsky, the most eminent Russian critic of the day. Hardly has the door opened, when he starts crying aloud: "A new Gogol has arisen!" He waves the manuscript aloft while Belinsky grumbles non-committally, put out by so much enthusiasm: "Gogols are as thick as blackberries if one is to believe all you say." Next day, however, when Dostoeffsky comes to see him, Belinsky's mood has completely changed. "Do you yourself realize what you have done?" Such are the words with which he accosts the amazed young man. Dostoeffsky thrills as he realizes that this may mean fame—a new sensation for him. He goes down the stairs in a dream; arrived at the corner of the street, he stands in confusion. For the first time he feels (and yet hardly dares to trust his own feelings) that all these dark and terrible forces that urge him onward must be something mighty, perhaps,

even, the "greatness" of which he dreamed as a child, the "immortality," the much-desired privilege of "suffering for the whole of mankind." Exaltation and contrition, pride and humility, contend together in his heart. He knows not to which voice he should listen. He goes on his way, stumbling forward like a drunken man; tears stream unheeded down his face, tears of joy and of sorrow.

Such was the melodramatic way in which Dostoeffsky established his position as a writer. Even in this instance, we find that the course taken by his life was closely followed by that taken by his creative work. There is something of the sensational novel, something childlike and primitive, in both; it is only by their inner greatness and truth that they are caught up into the realm of the magnificent. In Dostoeffsky's career, an incident may begin as melodrama, but it invariably ends in tragedy. His life is founded upon tension: decisions are compressed into a single second of time, without transition; ten or twenty such seconds of ecstasy or of collapse suffice to determine the course of his destiny. One might go so far as to call these moments of ecstasy or of impotent collapse "epileptic fits of life." At the back of each minute of ecstasy there stands, threateningly, the grey twilight of waning sensation, and from the clouds flash lightnings. He has to pay for every flight by a subsequent fall; each second of grace has to be followed by numberless minutes of toil and of despair. Fame, the glowing halo which Belinsky in that morning hour had pressed upon Dostoeffsky's head, became simultaneously the first link in the chain of arduous labours which he had to drag behind him all his life. *White Nights* was the last book he wrote as a free man and in the sheer joy of creation. Thenceforward, writing was for him a means of livelihood, a means

of liquidating his debts and of repaying loans. Every line was pledged before it was written, the child sold before it was born. He was chained in the galleys of literature, his despairing cries for freedom echoed down all the days of his life: death alone could break the fetters that bound him. How little did he guess, when enjoying his initial success, the torment that awaited him! A couple of short stories were quickly finished, and he immediately set about planning a new novel.

But fate, ever on the watch, lifts a warning finger. Life must not become too easy. Dostoeffsky must plumb it to the depths; and, that he may do so, God, who loves him, puts him to the test.

Again, as once before, the door-bell rings in the night. This time no friendly voice accosts him to announce joyful tidings and coming fame. Instead, he hears the message of doom. Officers and Cossacks press forward into the room; the occupant is arrested; seals are placed upon his papers. During four months he languishes in the Peter-Paul Fortress, without knowing the crime for which he is being made to suffer. He is indicted for having taken part in the discussions of a rather excitable group of friends, discussions which later became known by the grossly exaggerated name of "the Petrasheffsky conspiracy." Dostoeffsky's arrest was undoubtedly due to a misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the sentence pronounced upon him was the most rigorous known to the law: he was to be shot.

The whole of his destiny is once more compressed into a second of time, the most restricted and yet the richest moment of his existence; an unending second, wherein the lips of death and of life meet in a burning kiss. At dawn, he and his nineteen comrades are escorted from the prison,

are made to strip to their shirts, are tied to posts, and have their eyes bandaged. Dostoeffsky listens as his death sentence is read aloud; the drums are sounded. His entire future is pressed as it were into a handful of suspense; boundless despair and a boundless desire for life are condensed into a molecule of time. Then, an officer raises his hand, waves a white cloth, reads the tsar's pardon, and announces that the sentence of death has been commuted to one of penal servitude in Siberia.

He now plunges down into an abyss where oblivion is his portion after his brief gleam of youthful celebrity. During four years his horizon is to be confined by fifteen hundred oaken pales. In sorrow and privation, he ticks off the four times three hundred and sixty-five days of his captivity. His companions are criminals, thieves, and murderers for the most part; his occupations, alabaster grinding, brick carrying, snow shovelling; his one permitted book, the Bible; his pets, a mangy cur and a broken-winged eagle. Four years he dwells in the "house of the dead," in the underworld, a shade amid the shades, nameless and forgotten. By the time the chains have been knocked off the weary ankles and the paling has been left behind, he has become another man: his health is undermined, his fame has vanished into thin air, his whole existence has been shattered. His desire for life alone remains to him, unchanged and intact; brighter than ever, the ardent fire of ecstasy flames up from the wax of his plastic body. A few more years must be spent in Siberia before he may return to Russia; throughout this period he is only half free and is not allowed to publish a line. During his exile, crushed by the bitterest despair and solitude, he enters into that strange marriage of his, with an ailing woman of most pe-

culiar character, who grudgingly reciprocates his compassionate love. The dark tragedy which underlay his sacrifice is doomed to be for ever hidden from our ken, though in *Insulted and Injured* we are permitted a glimpse of the quiet heroism that inspired him.

He returns to Petersburg an unknown man. His literary sponsors have left him in the lurch, his friends have dispersed. But by courage and energy he fights his way out of the waves which threaten to submerge him, and wins to safety. His *House of the Dead*, this unique record of life among criminals, rouses Russia from the lethargy of lukewarm sympathy. The nation realizes with horror that immediately beneath the superficial layers of the quiet world in which it lives, there is another world, a purgatory wherein is to be found every conceivable misery. The voice of the accuser penetrates within the walls of the Kremlin itself; the tsar sobs over the book; a thousand lips pronounce Dostoeffsky's name. One year suffices to recapture his fame, which is now greater than ever, and far more secure. Together with his brother, he founds a journal, for which he writes almost all the articles; the poet becomes the preacher, the political propagandist, the "praeceptor Borussiae." Success is instantaneous; the periodical has a wide circulation. He puts the finishing touches to a novel; happiness beckons once more. Dostoeffsky's career seems now to be on a solid foundation.

But again the sombre Will that brooded over this man's life intervened, saying: "Not yet!" Two earthly torments had hitherto been spared him: the martyrdom of being an exile under foreign skies, and the daily worry about how to provide even the barest necessaries of life. Siberia and the katorga, those ugliest grimaces on the face of Russia,

were still "home"; now he was to experience the yearning of the nomad for the shelter of his tribal tent. Once more he must plunge beneath the waters of oblivion, ere he can become the herald of his nation. Lightnings from on high strike down the work of his creation: his periodical is suppressed. The prohibition is again the outcome of a misunderstanding, but its effects are just as dire as those of the previous interference with Dostoeffsky's activities. Blow upon blow follows: his wife dies; then his brother; then his dearest friend and helper. The debts of two families are heaped upon his shoulders, and cripple him. He labours feverishly by day and by night in a vain endeavour to meet the demands of his creditors; he writes and edits his works and even sets them up in print himself, in order to save money and to rescue his honour and his existence. Fate is stronger than he, and he cannot cope with his liabilities. He flees like a guilty man, flees under cover of night, away into foreign lands.

Thus began his wanderings through Europe as an exile, those long and dreary days of severance from that Russian soil which meant so much to him, a severance which seemed to crib his spirit between narrower walls than did the stockade of his katorga days. It is terrible to think what this great Russian writer, this sublimest genius of his generation, this herald of the infinite, must have suffered as he flitted aimless and penniless from country to country.

Poverty-stricken, he has difficulty in finding shelter under even the humblest of roofs; epilepsy racks his nerves; debts and duties egg him on from toil to toil; perplexity and shame drive him from one town to another. If a ray of happiness shines into his life, it is immediately obscured by gathering clouds. A young lass, Anna Grigorevna, his

shorthand writer, becomes his second wife; but the first child that is born to them is snatched from them after a few months, the victim of its mother's debility and the penury which dogged the steps of its exiled parents. Siberia was no more than purgatory, the anteroom of Dostoeffsky's sufferings; France, Germany, and Italy were his hell. It seems impertinent to try and picture the actuality of so tragical an existence. If ever, happening to be in Dresden, I find myself strolling down a street of sordid, ill-conditioned houses, I ponder whether it may not have been one of these that sheltered Dostoeffsky, an inconspicuous abode squeezed in among those of Saxon tradespeople. I picture him alone in some fourth-story room, alone, everlastingly alone encircled by foreigners.

No one knew him during these years of exile. A few miles away, in Naumberg, Nietzsche was living, the one man who might have understood him; Richard Wagner, Hebbel, Flaubert, Gottfried Keller, his contemporaries, are within hail, but he knows no more about them than they about him. Like a dangerous animal, unkempt, in threadbare garments, he lurches forth from his workroom and his steps lead him to the same haunts no matter whether he be living in Dresden, in Geneva, or in Paris: he invariably finds his way to some café or club where he can read the Russian newspapers. He must feel Russia's presence, for Russia is home; he takes pleasure in the mere sight of the Cyrillic letters, and the associations called up by the familiar words.

Sometimes, not out of any special love for art (in these matters he remains true to type, the Byzantine barbarian, the iconoclast), but simply in order to warm himself during the cold weather, he goes to a picture gallery. He knows

nothing of the people around him but he hates them because they are not Russians; he hates the Germans in Germany, and the French in France. His heart is in Russia, though his body is elsewhere. Not a word does he exchange with any of his German, or French, or Italian colleagues.

The only place where he is a familiar figure is at the bank, where for days on end his pale face is seen, while, his voice trembling with anxiety, he inquires whether at last a credit has not come from Russia, the pittance of a hundred roubles he has had to abase himself to beg from the hands of strangers. The clerks do not even try to check their smiles as the poor fool appears, always hopeful and expectant. At the pawnbroker's, too, he is well known, for he has pledged everything he possesses; once he even pawned his trousers in order to have the wherewithal to dispatch a telegram to Petersburg, a message so poignant that it sends a shudder down one's back, and whose tones are so frequently re-echoed in his letters. One's heart is wrung as one reads the fawning phrases used by this great man in his humiliating need, the letters in which he reiterates his demands for money, calling upon the name of Christ over and over again; these terrible letters in which he begs for a paltry handful of roubles. All night he sits at his writing-table; and, while his wife is groaning in labour in the adjoining room, while epilepsy prepares for the assault, while the landlady, backed by the police, threatens proceedings if she is not paid her rent, and the midwife clamours for her fee, he composes *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *The Possessed*, and *The Gambler*, those monumental works of the nineteenth century wherein are portrayed the universal types of our spiritual world.

Work is his salvation, but also his torment. While at his

writing he lives in Russia, his native land. He languishes in Europe as in the katorga, and for that reason he immerses himself ever deeper in his works. They act as an elixir, inebriating him; they are a game which makes his every nerve tense. Meanwhile, he greedily counts the days till he may go home, as of yore he counted the dates in his prison-house; a beggar if needs must, but home, home at last. Russia, Russia, Russia; such is his reiterated cry in his sore distress. But he cannot go back yet; he must still remain nameless for his work's sake; must still wander forlorn along the streets of foreign towns; must still continue to suffer patiently, uncomplainingly. He must dwell among the husks of life, ere he can rise transcendent to the topmost pinnacle of enduring fame. His body is exhausted by privations, illness is making inroads upon his brain so that for days together he lies half comatose. Yet no sooner is the attack over than he betakes himself to his work-table again. He is now fifty years of age: but he has experienced the torture of an æon.

Then, at last, when he is wellnigh spent, fate speaks once more: "It is enough!" God turns his face to Job. At the age of fifty-two Dostoeffsky is able to return to his homeland. His books have fought his battles for him; Turgeneff, Tolstoy, are thrown into the shade; Russia has eyes for none but him. *An Author's Daybook* makes of him the herald of his people. With his last remaining strength and with consummate art, he completes the work which is to be his testament to the future of the nation, *The Brothers Karamazoff*. Now he is vouchsafed a glance at the meaning of his destiny, and he is granted a moment of superlative happiness: for it is made known to him that the seed of his life has sprouted to become a thing eternal. Just as, in

the past, his sufferings have been compressed into seconds of intensity, so at this period is his triumph condensed into a fraction of time: his God flashes lightnings upon him, but not in order to destroy him; on the contrary, he is, like a prophet, wafted aloft on a chariot of fire into eternity. The great writers of Russia are invited to commemorate the centenary of Pushkin's birth; each is expected to make a speech. Turgeneff, the "westerner," the author who all along has usurped Dostoeffsky's place in the house of fame, takes precedence, and makes a speech received by the audience with mild attention and civil tolerance. Next day, Dostoeffsky is to give his contribution; he seizes his opportunity in a spirit of daimonic exaltation, and flings his thunderbolts among the assembly. He begins in a soft and rather husky voice; but suddenly, like a storm, his words flame up in ecstatic ardour; he proclaims the sacred mission of Russia as the universal reconciler of national and spiritual oppositions. His hearers, like sickled wheat, fall prostrate at his feet. The rafters ring with the explosion of joy from a thousand hearts; women kiss his hands; a student collapses in a fainting fit; the other speakers forgo their privilege and do not pronounce their orations. Enthusiasm knows no limit; glory burns like a halo around the head of him who has hitherto worn a crown of thorns.

This triumph was granted him by destiny: one glowing moment was to manifest the fulfilment of his mission and the victory won by his work. Then, the sound fruit having successfully been extracted, fate flung the empty husk of his body aside. On February 10, 1881, Dostoeffsky died. A shudder passed through the nation: this was followed by a moment of speechless grief. Then, from every town, no matter how distant it might be, came a flow of deputations.

This was no organized demonstration, but the spontaneous outburst of a people wishing to pay Dostoeffsky the last honours. In every nook and corner of the great city, hearts glowed with love for thè mighty dead. Too late! Too late now to show their love for him who, while life lasted, they had forgotten. His body lay in state in his study, and the street was black with people who came to pay their mournful respects. The crowd of Dostoeffsky's admirers surrounded the modest dwelling, begging for a blossom or a leaf from the wealth of wreaths and bouquets that filled the room to overflowing. Hardly a flower was left as the day wore to a close. The heat in the death-chamber was so intense that the candles went out for lack of air. Still the people came, wave upon wave breaking against the table whereon the body lay. So tremendous was the onslaught, that the coffin was displaced, and might have fallen had not the widow and the two terrified children been there to save it from crashing to the ground.

The chief of police was at first loath to sanction a public funeral, for the students wished to carry the Siberian convict's chains in the rear of the hearse, and many dreaded the outcome of such pageantry. Nevertheless, the authorities did not venture to use force, and decided it was wiser to respect the popular feeling than to stifle it. During the memorable procession, Dostoeffsky's dream became, for one hour at least, a reality: Russia was unified. Just as in his works the classes and the masses were associated by a sense of confraternity, so now there was an unforeseen and unexpected fusion of the hundreds of thousands who followed him to the grave. Fired by a national idea, all parties, all adversaries, were reconciled and united by their common grief. Young scions of the blood royal, priests,

workers, students, officers, lackeys, and beggars, marching forward under a forest of flags, joined voices to mourn the departed. The church where the mass for the dead was to be celebrated was encumbered with flowers, and at the grave-side all parties swore a solemn pact of love and reverence. Thus, in this last hour, he bestowed the gift of reconciliation upon his people, and, with elemental strength, he was able to hold together in momentary solidarity the mad contradictions of his epoch.

A stupendous salute is fired as he descends into the tomb, a terrible mine explodes: the revolution! For, three weeks after the funeral, the tsar is assassinated; the land is filled with the thunders of revolt, and the lightnings of chastisement flash athwart the skies. Dostoeffsky, like Beethoven, passes away while the elements are in an uproar: he dies amid the clamour of a storm.

THE MEANING OF HIS DESTINY

Lo, I became a master
To suffer and rejoice;
And in the lust to suffer
True ecstasy found voice.
GOTTFRIED KELLER

Dostoeffsky's struggle against his fate knew no end; it took the form of a kind of loving antagonism. Every conflict led to a painful crisis, every contrast stretched his spirit to breaking-point. Life hurts him because it loves him; and he loves life because it takes so firm a grip of him; for this sage knows that suffering is the finest school for the emotions, and that it holds the greatest possibilities for the development of the sentiments. Fate never relinquishes its pressure upon him; always he is being constrained to renewed servitude, in order that he, this one true believer, may become the everlasting witness to its power and splendour. It wrestles with him, as the angel did with Jacob, throughout the long night of life until the rosy dawn when death claims him; and never does he find release until he has blessed it. Dostoeffsky, the "servant of God," comprehends the magnitude of this message, and finds his greatest happiness in that he is to be coerced for ever by illimitable forces. He kisses the cross with fever-parched lips. "Nothing is more necessary to man than to bow his head in face of the infinite." Broken beneath the burden of his destiny, he still has strength to raise pious hands as testimony to the greatness and holiness of life.

By accepting his thraldom to fate, Dostoeffsky, through meekness and intuition, became the victor over suffering, and the mightiest master and the most complete transmuter of values since the days of the Testament. Through struggle he grew strong; the hammer-blows on the anvil of his life forged his supreme powers. The more debilitated his body, the higher soared his faith; the greater his sufferings as a man, the easier was it for him to perceive the meaning and the need for worldwide suffering. Amor fati, a resigned love of one's destiny, a thing Nietzsche looked upon as the most fruitful law of life, permitted Dostoeffsky to see in every hostility, fulfilment, and in every trial, salvation. As with Balaam, curses turned to the chosen one's advantage, and became a blessing; humiliation was metamorphosed into exaltation. While in Siberia with chains clanking at his ankles, he penned an ode to the tsar who was the real author of the sentence which had consigned an innocent man to penal servitude; with what seems to us an incomprehensible humility, he was ever kissing the hand that chastened him. Thus he was always ready to bear witness to the beauty of life. Like a Lazarus rising livid from the tomb, he came back daily to consciousness from the imminence of death and from the convulsive twitchings of his epileptic seizures; while the foam still flecked his lips he rallied his energies to sing a hymn of praise to the deity who sent such trials. With every fresh affliction, a renewed love of suffering was awakened in his heart; unquenchable was his thirst, almost masochistic his yearning, for the martyr's crown. Each time that fate dealt him a blow, though his head was bloody and his body crushed, he sighed for other blows from the same hand. The lightnings that struck him, he gathered up as it were, and transformed that

which was to have consumed him into spiritual fire and creative ecstasy.

Such an amazing power for transfiguring experiences cuts the ground from beneath the feet of destiny and deprives it of its dominion. That which might appear as punishment and trial to an ordinary man, when contemplated through the sage's eyes is seen to be helpful; a visitation which is calculated to crumple up an ordinary mortal, puts the poet, the creative artist, on his mettle. A visitation which would crush the weak, steels the ecstatic's strength to fresh endeavour. The nineteenth century affords us a striking example of this varying reaction to similar circumstances. Oscar Wilde was hit by the same kind of thunderbolt. He, too, an author whose name was already famous, a man of good position, was torn from the cultured world in which he moved, and was herded in prison among criminals. But, whereas Wilde was crushed by this tribulation, Dostoeffsky came out of an identical martyrdom like pure metal from a fiery furnace. Oscar Wilde feels overpowered by the shame inflicted upon him, by the ostracism he will have in future to suffer from his peers, for he is pre-eminently a social being, a society man whose instincts are turned to outward things; for him it is an intolerable humiliation that, when he enters Reading Gaol, the bath he must take is one in which the water has already served for the ablutions of ten of his fellow-convicts. Belonging to a privileged, a delicately nurtured class, his shudder at this enforced contact with the crowd is the shudder of the aristocrat compelled to rub shoulders with the canaille. Dostoeffsky, however, the new man who rises superior to class distinctions, feels delight instead of repulsion at having thus to mingle with the masses. For him, the dirty bathwater becomes a

purgatorial fire for the cleansing of his soul from pride. When he helps a Tatar to wash, he thrills ecstatically, for in imagination he participates in the Christian mystery of the washing of feet. Wilde, for whom to be a gentleman is something more than to be a man, fears lest his fellow-prisoners may take him to be one of themselves, a fear which adds greatly to his torment: Dostoeffsky suffers only in so far as the thieves and murderers among whom he lives deny him their friendship; for he feels every reserve on their part, every lack of brotherly affection, as a flaw in his own human kindness, as a personal insufficiency. Just as coal and diamonds are the products of one and the same element, so is this duplex destiny one and the same for these two men, and yet so different in its reactions on them both. Wilde's career is finished when he emerges from prison, Dostoeffsky's is merely begun; Wilde is consumed to a valueless ash in the same fires which steel Dostoeffsky to a brilliant hardness. Because he would defend himself from fate's blows, Wilde is chastised like an unruly thrall; but Dostoeffsky, who clasps his fate to his heart and loves it, triumphs over all its onslaughts.

Dostoeffsky is so consummate in his skill as a transmuter, he is so dexterous in changing what should have been a humiliation into an exaltation, that destiny's bludgeonings can only serve to develop his powers. Through the extremest dangers he wins to inner security, so that his torment is a gain, his vices become stepping-stones to higher things, his inhibitions are encouragements. Siberia, the katorga, epilepsy, poverty, his craze for gambling, his sensuality, all the crises he went through, became, thanks to his stupendous powers of sublimation, fruitful assets to his art. For, just as the most precious of metals are grubbed from

the deep recesses of a mine, amid manifold dangers, far beneath the smooth, safe ways of ordinary existence, so the artist can secure his most burning truths, his final realizations, only from the most perilous abysses of his own nature. From the point of view of art, Dostoeffsky's life may be considered a tragedy; but, from the ethical outlook, it is an achievement without precedent, because it constitutes the triumph of a man over his destiny, a transformation of the exterior life by the might of an inner urge.

Above all, it is a triumph of the spiritual forces over a body undermined by illness and weakened by suffering. For we must never forget that Dostoeffsky was a sick man, that his imperishable work was wrought by flagging limbs and racked nerves. He was ever in the presence of death; he suffered from epileptic fits during the thirty years of his literary activity. The hand of the "strangling demon" might seize hold of him at any moment, when he was in the midst of work, or walking in the street, or while in converse with a friend. Even in sleep he was not spared. As a child he was easily overwrought, and experienced strange hallucinations; but the "holy sickness" did not manifest itself in its full virulence until later, during his sojourn in Siberia; thenceforward, like all his other trials, his poverty and his privations, it remained with him till the end of his days. Dostoeffsky never complained of his martyrdom, as did Beethoven about his deafness, Byron about his misshapen foot, or Rousseau about his bladder trouble. Nor can we find any evidence that he ever seriously sought to be cured. We may even go so far as to suppose that, with his inexhaustible "amor fati," he could include this terrible affliction within the compass of his love. Dostoeffsky, by

taking an artistic and scientific interest in his troubles, achieved mastery over them.

He is able to convert his sickness, the greatest menace to his life and reason, into the sublimest secret of his art: he extracts a mysterious beauty from it, and allows us to savour with him the wonderful moments immediately preceding the attacks. Death in the midst of life is then, he tells us, presented in a quintessential form; "pure being," in this moment of imminent destruction, is felt to be something rapturous and sublime; life is quickened to become a "consciousness of self" stretched to such a point of tension as to be morbid in its vehemence. Such moments recurred at frequent intervals, so that the seconds when he stood bound in the Semenoffsky Square were perpetually being renewed, as if it were fate's purpose to prevent his forgetting the awesome contrast between All and Nothingness.

Like water from an overfilled vessel, his soul flows from his body; it flutters upward towards God; a celestial ray shines down on the disembodied spirit, bringing light and grace from another world; earth recedes; the music of the spheres becomes audible. But the thunder of awakening crashes into the vision and hurls the would-be stormer of heaven back into the world of everyday life. Each time Dostoeffsky describes the moment which precedes the epileptic attack, his words assume the lilt of a pæan: "You who enjoy good health never suspect the delight which permeates us epileptics a second before the seizure. Mahomet tells us in the Koran that he beheld paradise, that he was there during the fleeting moment while the water ran out of his overturned pitcher; and the wiseacres affirm that he was a liar. But he was no liar. He undoubtedly visited paradise during an epileptic fit (for he suffered from epilepsy

just as I do). I cannot tell how long these moments of bliss last . . . but you may believe me when I say that I would not forgo them were I offered all the joys of earth in exchange."

In this electrifying second, Dostoeffsky reaches out beyond the sublunary and embraces infinitude. But he does not tell us of the grievous suffering with which he must pay for his convulsive approach towards God's throne. Collapse follows, during which the crystalline moment is shattered to atoms; with weary limbs and benumbed senses he falls back, like another Icarus, into the pitchy night of our planet. Feeling, still dazzled by the incandescent light, moves uneasily within the prison of the body; the senses, blinded by the splendour of God's presence, and stunned as soon as the light is withdrawn, crawl wearily across the floor of existence. After every attack, Dostoeffsky lies in a penumbral darkness, when his condition borders on idiocy; the horror of this state is described by Prince Myshkin with merciless lucidity. He takes to his bed, his limbs battered and bruised, his tongue refusing to obey, his hand too listless to hold the pen: sullen and exhausted, he denies himself to any who may wish to see him. The clarity of mind, which but a moment before had enabled him to compress a thousand units into one harmonic whole, is darkened; he cannot remember the simplest fact; the threads which bind him to life, to the world around him, to his work, are severed. While he was writing *The Possessed*, he found as he emerged from one of his fits that he could recall neither the events of his own creation nor even the names of his characters. It was only by slow degrees that he was able to relive the world he had imagined, and with difficulty that he could rekindle the fires of inspiration. His finest achieve-

ment, the great novels, were written against a background of poverty and privation, with epilepsy always threatening, and the taste of death upon his lips. With the confidence of a sleepwalker, he strides along the narrow ridgeway between madness and death, creating mighty works as he proceeds. From the perpetual contact with death there arises again and ever again that elemental energy which is eager to clasp life in order to inspire it with the supremest power and passion.

As Merezhkoffsky has so brilliantly pointed out, Dostoeffsky's genius owed as deep a debt to this illness, as Tolstoy's to his radiant health. It was the malady which enabled Dostoeffsky to soar upward into a sphere of such concentrated feeling as is rarely experienced by normal men; it permitted him to penetrate into the underworld of the emotions, into the submerged regions of the psyche. The duplexity of his nature, the power of wakefulness in the midst of dreams, the way in which his intellect crept into every labyrinth of the emotions, provided him with the means of giving to pathological occurrences their metaphysical content, and of elucidating that which hitherto only the dissecting knife of science had been able, inadequately, to lay bare on the post-mortem table. Like Odysseus, the man of many journeyings, the messenger from Hades, so Dostoeffsky, the only one to return from the land of the shades in full possession of his faculties, describes with painstaking precision his experiences there, and bears witness to the existence of undreamed-of conditions 'twixt life and death. Because of his malady, he was able to achieve that highest of arts, for which Stendhal found the formula: "inventer des sensations inédites"; emotions which exist in us all in the germ, but which, on account of

the coldness of our blood, rarely blossom into full maturity. The delicate aural perception of the invalid permits him to surprise the least syllable of the language of the soul ere it sinks beneath the waters of delirium; his finely poised feelings lead him to a vigorous synthesis of the vibrations of the senses; and a mystical penetration bestows on him, in the moment preluding the fit, the gift of second sight, and the power to perceive analogies. This is indeed a transfiguration, one that is pregnant with meaning in emotional crises. Dostoeffsky the artist annexes every danger that comes his way, making it his own: thereby, Dostoeffsky the man acquires renewed greatness, a greatness of wider scope.

For him happiness and suffering are the goal towards which the feelings strive; they represent an unequally enhanced intensity; he does not appraise his experience by the familiar standards of average life, but by a measuring-rod adapted to the exaltations of his own frenzy. For ordinary beings the acme of happiness is achieved by the contemplation of a landscape, by the possession of a woman, by a sense of harmonious completeness; always it is the enjoyment of some earthly good. The climax of sensibility in Dostoeffsky, on the other hand, is to be found in the realm of the unbearable, in the region of death. His happiness is a spasm, a cramp, with foam at the lips; his torment is collapse, destruction; always the essential condition is one which has no appreciable duration here on earth, and which is compressed with lightning speed into an infinitesimal fraction of time; these moments attain so high a temperature, that it is impossible to hold them more than a second in the hand. One who in life experiences death knows more intimately the sensation of primitive horror

than does a normal man. He whose spirit has soared free of the body experiences a more sublime delight than one who knows nothing but the corporeal world. The former's idea of happiness is entrancement; his concept of suffering is annihilation. For him, therefore, happiness is not merely an enhanced cheerfulness, but a condition in which the fires attain incandescent heat, a condition tremulous with tears, and aware of the proximity of danger; it is an unbearable and unstable condition, a torture rather than a joy. Again, the suffering such a one endures is not the breathless anxiety experienced by ordinary mortals; he has crossed the bridge, leaving behind him trouble and dread, to enter a world of icy, almost smiling, clarity, a region filled with a craving for bitterness, where tears are unknown, where hollow laughter and a devilish snigger verging on pleasure greet the traveller at every turn. No one before Dostoeffsky has been able with such skill to lay bare the polarity of the emotions, the perpetual swing from ecstasy to annihilation, the extremes of joy and pain.

Dostoeffsky can only be understood in the light of this polarity. He is the victim of a duplex life; and, since he accepts his fate with passionate approval, he becomes the enthusiastic portrayer of its contrasts. It is to the friction between these opposing elements that he owes the ardour of his temperament; and, far from trying to reconcile them, he severs them as widely as possible asunder, sending them flying upward to heaven or down into the nethermost hell. The wound of this severance is never allowed to heal in the fires of creation. Dostoeffsky the artist is the most perfect example of antinomy, the greatest dualist, that art, and maybe humanity, has ever known.

One of his vices, his love of gambling, illustrates in a

symbolical manner this fundamental duality of his nature. Already as a boy he is passionately fond of a game of cards; but it is not until he comes to Europe that he learns the devil's dance his nerves can lead him. Rouge et noir, roulette; these are peculiarly dangerous games for a man of his temperament. The green table in Baden-Baden, the casino in Monte Carlo, afford him the greatest joy he experiences during his travels in the west; they delight him more than the Sistine Madonna, or the sculptures of Michelangelo, or the landscapes of southern climes; art and culture act like a hypnotic upon him. But at the gaming-table his nerves are taut, he must come to a decision: black or red, odd or even, luck or ruin, gain or loss. These are all pressed into one swift second as the wheel turns, a fleeting moment of tension which is fraught with pleasure and with pain, and which finds a counterpart in the antagonisms within his soul. Easy transitions, the reconciliation of opposites, gently ascending enthusiasms, are unbearable to this creature of feverish impatience; not for him a career of steady money-making after the German fashion, like a "sausage manufacturer"; he cares not to grow rich by being cautious and thrifty and calculating; what he loves are the chances of the game—all or nothing! As he sits at the gaming-table, his outward and visible destiny seems, consciously or unconsciously, to take the same course as his will, for ever making further demands on him, so that the moment when he is forced to a decision is curtailed to the utmost; the sensations are at their most acute, as if red-hot nails were being hammered into the tingling nerves; and he experiences a similar uncanny elation as during the second preceding an epileptic fit, or during that other unforgettable second in the Semenoffsky Square. Just as fate

plays with him, so will he now play with fate. He lures chance on to artificial tensions; and at the very moment when he is most secure, he tremblingly stakes his whole existence at the game of hazard. Dostoeffsky is not a gambler because he hungers for money. Like Karamazoff, he has an unquenchable, a "disreputably fanatical," thirst for life; he wants everything distilled into the strongest possible essence, because he has a craving for intoxication, because he wishes to be able to lean over the precipice and contemplate the depths from on high. He loves the abysses of life; he is fascinated by the demon of chance; in frenzied humility he worships the forces which are mightier than his own powers, and always anew he invites their murderous lightnings down upon his head. Dostoeffsky the gambler dares fate to do her worst. Venturing all, what he wins is the extreme of nervous intoxication, mortal agony, dread, a daimonic realization of the world-all. Even when he has drunk of the golden poison, even when he has won, his thirst is not quenched; he immediately begins to yearn anew for the divine elixir.

As in the case of all the passions he yielded to, he pushed his love of gambling to the limit of vice. This titan was temperamentally incapable of calling a halt, of exercising caution, of reflecting whither the passion was leading him. "During the whole of my life, I have invariably overstepped the boundaries," he writes. Now the overstepping of the boundaries is precisely what contributes to his greatness as an artist, but it is this which is so perilous to him as a man. He never pauses at the barriers set up by the bourgeois moral code; and none would venture to say how far his own life exceeded the limits permitted by the law, or how many of the criminal instincts ascribed to his heroes

were in fact a part of himself. One thing is certain, though it is by no means the most important. As a child he cheated at cards; and in later life, like that tragic madman Marmeladoff in *Crime and Punishment,* who stole his wife's stockings in order to procure spirits, Dostoeffsky rifles the cupboards of his home that he may obtain the wherewithal to play roulette. His biographers hesitate to inquire how close may be the analogy between Dostoeffsky's own vagaries and the sensual aberrations depicted in *The Underworld.* Who can tell whether the experiences of those "spiders of voluptuousness," Svidrigailoff and Stavrogin and Fedor Karamazoff, were actual occurrences in the author's life, or merely figments of the imagination? Dostoeffsky's inclinations and abnormalities also have their roots in those strange anomalies of his composition, in his strange longing both for corruption and for innocence; but we need not dwell on such conjectures, even though they may approximate to certainties. What is of importance, however, is for us to recognize that the Christ, the saint, the Alyosha Karamazoff in Dostoeffsky, are closely akin to the sensualist, the overwrought sex maniac, the unclean Fedor Karamazoff in his make-up.

This much we can say with confidence: in his sensuality, Dostoeffsky overstepped the bounds of the bourgeois code, and he did so, not in the mild form ascribed to himself by Goethe who once said that he felt all the impulses to scandalous deeds and criminal offences astir within him. Goethe's whole development was a ceaseless struggle to crush these tendencies and to uproot them. The Olympian longs for harmony, his greatest desire is to do away with contradictions, to quiet the turmoil of the blood, to promote the tranquil functioning of the powers of his soul. He

cuts away the sensuous growths, he destroys for morality's sake every seed which might imperil his art—and thereby as often as not he weakens his gifts! Dostoeffsky, on the other hand, a devotee of his own dualism as of everything else in life, does not desire to achieve a harmony which, so far as he is concerned, is a petrified condition; he refuses to fetter his inherent contradictions by imposing a "divine harmony" upon them. On the contrary, he strains them to the utmost so that they touch both God and the Devil, and have the universe between their two extremes. He desires life, unending life. Life is for him the only electrical discharge between the poles of his dualism. The seed within him, whether of good or of evil, must strain upward, so that in the rays of his passion it may blossom and bear fruit. He allows his vices to flourish, his instincts to grow unchecked; his criminal tendencies are folded securely in the underground welter of his life. He loves his vices and his illness; he loves gambling; he loves his wantonness and even his sensuousness; he loves them because they constitute the metaphysic of the flesh, a will to infinite enjoyment. Goethe's endeavour is to reach the Apollonian state of classical antiquity: Dostoeffsky's goal is Dionysian. He does not wish to become an Olympian; he does not want to resemble a god; all he desires is to be man, and to be this intensely. His ethic is not of the classical type, it does not comply to any norm: all it strives at is intensity. To live properly is, for him, to live strongly, to experience the whole sum of experience whether it be good or bad, to experience as vividly and as frenziedly as possible. For this reason, Dostoeffsky never sought a norm: what he aimed at was the fullness of life. His contemporary, Tolstoy, would often pause in the midst of work to question him-

self; he would abandon art, to ask whether what he wrote was for good or for evil, whether he was ordering his existence wisely or not. Tolstoy's life was, therefore, didactic, a treatise on good conduct: Dostoeffsky's life was a work of art, a tragedy, the fulfilment of a destiny. He did not work towards a specific aim, nor consciously; he did not stop to examine his motives; all he did was to steel himself. Tolstoy made public avowal of his shortcomings, accusing himself of the seven deadly sins. Dostoeffsky held his tongue; but his silence was more eloquent than all Tolstoy's self-accusatory diatribes put together. Dostoeffsky refused to judge his own conduct; he did not wish to change anything in his behaviour, or to better his proclivities: one desire alone possessed him—to acquire strength. He put up no struggle against what was evil and perilous in his nature: on the contrary, he loved these innate dangers because they acted as a spur; he exalted his sin so that his repentance might be more intense, and held up his pride to veneration in order to enjoy the subsequent humiliation the more. It would be childish to gloss over the satanic factors of his make-up, factors that were so closely akin to the divine; foolish to try to excuse his moral lapses; unpardonable to force into the petty leading-strings of bourgeois harmony, that which had the elemental beauty of the unmeasurable.

The Karamazoffs, the figure of the student in *A Raw Youth*, Stavrogin in *The Possessed*, Svidrigailoff in *Crime and Punishment*, these fanatics of the flesh, these demons of lascivious enjoyment, these initiates and masters of obscenity, are all of them the creations of one who had made personal acquaintance with the lowest forms of sensuality; for it is essential, if such figures are to be endowed to the full with grim reality, that he who conjures them out of

the void shall be filled with a spiritualized love of debauchery. Dostoeffsky's incomparable sensitiveness made him acquainted with eroticism in its twofold sense; for he knew the passionate intoxication of the flesh, when love lies sprawling in the slime and becomes debauchery; he had had experience of its most degraded forms, when it had become iniquity and crime; he had contemplated it behind every conceivable disguise; and had smiled at its every frenzy with sympathetic understanding. But he had also made acquaintance with love in its noblest aspects, when it had sloughed its earthly integument; when it was inspired with compassion, with holy pity, with a sense of the brotherhood of mankind; when it melted into tears. All these strange essences were a part of his very self; they were not ephemeral chemical traces such as are to be found in most great artists, but the purest and most pungent distillations.

Every transgression is depicted by Dostoeffsky against a background of sexual excitement, and with an actual vibration of the senses; many of them seem to have been personal experiences tinged with pleasure. And in writing thus I do not wish to imply that Dostoeffsky was a debauchee; only those who are woefully ignorant of him and his works could be guilty of so wrongheaded an impression. He was far from being a man of pleasure, a sensualist. Just as he sought suffering for suffering's sake, so likewise did he seek out pleasure for pleasure's sake; he was the servant of his impulses, the thrall of a domineering inquisitiveness concerning matters both spiritual and physical, the slave of an insatiable curiosity which scourged him forward into dangerous adventures and into the thorny thicket of aberration. Even when he yielded to the lusts of the flesh, he did not

do so in a spirit of vulgar enjoyment, but in playful mood, looking upon such pleasures as the expression of vital energy. His lapses were indulged in with a view to experiencing again and again the strange and tempestuous sensations of the epileptic fit, to living through that concentration of the emotions which preceded the attack, to suffering the subsequent and inevitable pangs of compunction. The one thing he loves while thus indulging is the beckoning peril, the tingling play of the nerves, the workings of nature within his own body; he seeks, with a strange mingling of consciousness and dimly felt shame, the counterpart to every passion, the foundation of repentance; in infamy he is on the watch for innocence, in crime he searches out the risks. His sensuality is a maze wherein every path is swallowed up; God and beast dwell side by side in the flesh. Once we have grasped this, we can understand the symbolism of the Karamazoff family; we can grasp the significance of the fact that Alyosha, the angel, the saint, was the son of Fedor, the foul "spider of voluptuousness." Voluptuousness procreates cleanliness, sin engenders greatness, lust is the parent of suffering, and suffering in its turn gives birth to lust. Contrasts are eternally producing contrasts: a whole universe lies spread out betwixt heaven and hell, betwixt God and the Devil.

The secret of Dostoeffsky's greatness lies in his limitless, restless, conscious, and defenceless surrender to his duplex destiny; this amor fati is the wellspring of his creative ecstasy. Because life was lavished so abundantly upon him and opened up such vistas of emotional suffering, he was able to love all that was terrible and good, divine and incomprehensible and everlastingly mysterious, in life. For his standard of measurement is eternity. Never

does he want the current of existence to flow less torrentially; on the contrary, he would gladly accelerate its speed. He therefore takes no trouble to avoid dangers, inasmuch as they provide opportunities for sensation and for inflaming the nerves. The germs of good and of evil, the passions and vices that have lain dormant within him from birth, are aroused and intensified by his own inspiration and ecstasy. In this hazardous game of life, this passionate interplay of forces, Dostoeffsky, urged on by his gambler's instinct, is continually putting his own self as stake upon the table—for it is only in the alternations of black and red, of death and life, that he can savour to the full the bitter-sweet voluptuousness of existence. "You placed me here; you will lead me forth again," says Dostoeffsky to Mother Nature, as Goethe did before him. He never dreams of trying to amend his destiny, to evade it, or to mitigate its harshness. He does not seek fulfilment or surcease or a peaceful conclusion, but an amplification of life through suffering; he stretches his emotions to greater and greater tensity, in order to attain to the maximum degree of feeling. He does not, like Goethe, wish to stiffen into a crystal; he would rather remain a flame, daily consuming himself in order daily, everlastingly, to revivify himself, to find himself anew, with powers magnified and with more salient contrasts. He does not want to conquer life but to feel it. Nor does he choose to be the master of his fate; rather does he prefer to remain a loyal servitor. It was only thus, by electing to be God's thrall, the most abject of his slaves, that he could attain to so profound a knowledge of all things human.

Dostoeffsky confided the control of his destiny into the hands of fate herself, and thereby he triumphed over tem-

poral chances. He was the archetypal man, subject to the everlasting powers; in him was resurrected, amid the clarity and scientific precision of our epoch, the bard of a mystic age, the sorcerer and seer, the frenzied prophet, the man of destiny. There was much of the primitive and heroic age in him. Other literary achievements rise from the levels of time like flowery hills, testifying to their evolution from the primal forces, but softened by time, and approachable even in their highest peaks which thrust snowcapped heads upward into the infinite. But the crests of Dostoeffsky's creations appear fantastic and grey, stony and bare and pitiless like the cone of an active volcano. Yet within that riven breast of his is a glow that comes from the molten core of our world. Aghast, we sense in his destiny and in his work the mysterious abysses of the universally human. As we gaze into this fiery heart, we realize that we are in touch with the timeless and primordial energies of the race.

DOSTOEFFSKY'S CHARACTERS

Oh, do not believe in the unity of men!
DOSTOEFFSKY

SINCE he himself is volcanic, his heroes are volcanic too, for each man testifies in the long run to the God who created him. Not one of Dostoeffsky's characters is at ease in our world; in every case their sensibilities reach back to the fundamental problems of life. The modern neurotic in them is intimately welded to the primitive being who knows naught of life but its passions; and, while pattering the formulas of the most recent acquisitions of knowledge, they propound the riddle of existence. Their forms have not yet cooled and acquired definitive shape, their physiognomies have not been smoothed and polished. They are unfinished, and are therefore endowed with twice the amount of vitality granted to ordinary men. A perfected human being is incapable of further development; whereas Dostoeffsky's creations, being unperfected, being uncompleted, are full of infinite potentiality. Human beings are heroes for him, and therefore worth depicting, only so long as they are problematic creatures, rent in sunder by conflicting trends: he shakes off his mature characters, just as a tree shakes off its ripe fruit. Dostoeffsky loves his creations only so long as they suffer, only so long as they manifest in a high degree the conflicting tendencies in his own life, so long as they are chaotic, so long as this primal disorder can shape itself into destiny.

If we are fully to appreciate Dostoeffsky's heroes, we cannot do better than compare them with those of other authors. Let us take any one of Balzac's heroes as typical of the heroes of French romance. We are immediately confronted by a rectilinear figure, circumscribed and inwardly complete. A concept as plain and unmistakable, and as conformable to laws, as a geometrical figure. Each one of Balzac's characters is moulded from the same clay throughout, is composed of a substance all parts of which give identical responses when tested in the laboratory of the spiritual chemist. They are elements, and as such possess the essential qualities of elements, that is to say they have conventional forms of reaction in the moral and psychical spheres. They can hardly be called human beings, for they have become little more than qualities turned to men, instruments of precision to record a passion. Any of his characters might just as well be named after the quality portrayed: Rastignac might be called Ambition; Goriot, Self-Immolation; Vautrin, Anarchy. In each of these individuals, an overmastering impulse has absorbed the other inner forces, and has pressed them into the service of the ruling passion. They can so easily be pigeon-holed because every one of them has but a single mainspring of energy built into his soul, and it is this which enables him to play his part in human society. Each of these persons falls like a bolt from the blue into the very midst of life. We are, indeed, tempted to describe them as automata, so precise is the way in which they react to everything; and they are like machines in that their effective work and their powers of resistance are calculable by anyone acquainted with their technique. He who is well versed in Balzac's books, can foresee the reactions of the characters with the same confidence as that

with which a physicist can calculate the trajectory of a projectile. Old Grandet, this reincarnation of Harpagon, thus inevitably becomes more and more avaricious as his daughter becomes more heroic and self-sacrificing. Goriot, on the other hand, even in the days when he is well-to-do and can afford to have his wig carefully powdered, is just the sort of man who will, when evil times come, sell his coat to provide for his daughters, and pawn his very last possession to ease their distress. He could act no otherwise; the unity of his character, the impulses which animate his fleshly tenement and only inadequately succeed in making a human being of him, force him to behave in the way Balzac describes. Balzac's characters, like those of Victor Hugo, Scott, and Dickens, are simple, and they all strive towards an obvious goal. They are unities, and are, therefore, ponderable upon the scales of morality. The multicoloured and variegated things we meet in this cosmos are chance occurrences, concrete happenings. It is experience which is diversified, whereas the personalities are homogeneous, the novel being the stage on which men and women wrestle with the forces of the terrestrial environment. Balzac's heroes, like all the heroes of the French novelists, are either stronger or weaker than the opposing forces of society. They either coerce life into line with their own desires, or are crushed beneath life's wheel.

The heroes of German fiction, such as Wilhelm Meister or Der grüne Heinrich, are not so sure of themselves as their French brethren. There are more cross-currents in them, they are psychologically differentiated, their spiritual composition is polyphonic. Good and evil, strength and weakness, contend for dominance in their souls. They start life bewildered, and the mists of morning veil the clarity

of their vision. They are aware of the forces within them, but these forces have not yet been harmonized or brought into proper relation; they are not yet unified, but are inspired with a will towards unity. In the last resort, the German spirit always aims at orderliness. The personality of the hero is gradually moulded to conform to the German ideal; the man becomes thoroughly efficient; "in the waters of the world the character is upbuilt," as Schiller once said. The elements, which have been jostled together in the hurly-burly of life, settle down in time, and become crystallized; the raw youth steps out of his 'prentice years a fully fledged master; and from the last page of each one of those books, whether it be *Der grüne Heinrich*, or *Hyperion*, or *Wilhelm Meister*, or *Ofterdingen*, the hero looks forth clear-eyed and energetic into a fair and lucid world. Life conciliates itself with the ideal; the disciplined energies are no longer frittered away in spendthrift confusion, but co-ordinated so as to attain the highest aim. Goethe's heroes, and indeed all the heroes created by German authors, reach the goal they set out to win; they realize themselves to the utmost; they become active, practical, and reliable. They learn to apply the lessons of life's experiences.

Dostoeffsky's heroes, on the other hand, neither seek a contact with real life, nor ever find it; that is their peculiarity. They do not wish to penetrate into reality; from the first their aim is to transcend reality, and to pass beyond it into infinity. Their destiny does not exist for them in any outward form, but has a purely esoteric significance. Their kingdom is not of this world. All palpable possession, all values, titles, power, and pelf, are illusory forms so far as they are concerned; such things are worthless whether

as aims (as they are with Balzac) or as means (as they are for the German authors). They have no desire to belong to this world, or to maintain it, or to order it. They do not spare themselves, but squander themselves; they do not calculate consequences but remain for ever incalculable. Unstable by temperament, they seem at first idle dreamers; yet it is only their outward aspect which gives the impression of vacancy. They are not concerned about externals. Their gaze is turned inward; all the ardour and fire of their natures is concentrated upon their own existence. The Russian intuitively reaches out towards the whole. He wants to become conscious of himself and his life, not of the shadows of these things, or of their reflexion in a mirror, their superficial reality: what he would probe is the vast and mystical and elementary; the cosmic power; the conscious sensation of existence. The deeper we penetrate into Dostoeffsky's works, the more do we discern the fundamentally primitive, almost fanatical urge towards life, the keen awareness of being, the archetypal yearning, not so much for happiness or pain (which are specific forms of life, implying valuation, and differentiation), as for an integral, unified pleasure, such as we feel when we breathe. These creatures of Dostoeffsky's universe wish to drink at the fountain-head, not from the pipes and conduits in the streets of our cities; they want to feel eternity, the infinite, within their hearts, and to escape the temporal. The only world they have cognizance of is the one that has no end; they do not know anything about the social world. They neither desire to study life, nor to constrain it; they wish merely to feel it, to feel it as the ecstasy of existence.

At first these figures appear somewhat artless; they are antagonistic to the world because they love the world, and

they seem unreal because of their eager regard for reality. They have no visible aim; they grope and stumble like drunken men. They come to a standstill, look around, ask every conceivable question, and, ere the answer is forthcoming, they have departed into the void. They seem to have but lately emerged into this world of ours, and not yet to have found their bearings. They would be difficult to understand, did we not remember of a sudden that they are Russians, the children of a nation abruptly thrust into our European culture from a millennial and barbaric unconsciousness. Wrenched from the ancient, patriarchal culture of their forbears, they have not yet become accustomed to the new; they stand, hesitant, at the crossways, not knowing which road to choose; the indecision of each is the indecision of an entire people. We Europeans dwell amid our old traditions as in a cosily warmed house. The Russian of the nineteenth century, the Russian of Dostoeffsky's day, had burned the log-cabin of a barbarous antiquity, but had not yet built his new habitation. He was uprooted, and had no idea which path to follow. The strength of youth, the strength of the primitive, was still his; but his instincts were confused before the complexity of the problems with which he was faced: his hands were eager and strong, but they did not know what to seize on first. Thus they grabbed at everything, and were never satiated. Herein we sense the tragedy underlying Dostoeffsky's figures, underlying every cleavage in their natures, every inhibition; for it is the same tragedy which underlay the destiny of the Russian nation. The Russia of the mid-nineteenth century did not know whither it was going, whether towards the west or towards the east, towards Europe or towards Asia, towards Petersburg, the "artificial city," and civilization, or

back to the peasant smallholding in the boundless steppe. Turgeneff pushed his compatriots forwards; Tolstoy held them back. Everything was in a flux. Tsarism stood contraposed to anarchist communism; orthodoxy was running wild and giving birth to atheism. Nothing was stable, nothing had a fixed value: the stars of faith no longer shone in the firmament above the heads of the Russian multitudes, and law had left its abiding place in their hearts. Old traditions were uprooted, and Dostoeffsky's men and women were true to type; they were transitional creatures, with chaos in their souls, burdened with inhibitions and uncertainties. Everlastingly affrighted and intimidated, humiliated and affronted—because they knew not who they were, whether of much value or worthless—they stood on the dividing line between pride and self-contempt, constantly looking over their shoulders to see what others were about, wretched and anxious lest they were making themselves a laughing-stock. They were for ever ashamed: at one moment the wearing of a shabby fur coat would put them to the blush, at another they would feel abashed on behalf of the entire Russian nation. The ever-present sense of shame made them uneasy and bewildered. Their feelings lacked anchorage, guidance, measure, and law; lacked the protective garment of tradition and the support of a philosophy, the intellectual heritage of many generations. They were rudderless and adrift on the waters of an unexplored ocean. None of their questions had been answered, no road had been made straight for their pilgrimage. They were essentially a people in an age of transition, a people belonging to the beginning of time. Each of them was a Cortés: they had burned their boats, and were marching forth into the unknown.

And the marvel of their emergence lay in the fact that, because they were a people of a primal age, within each of them the world was beginning afresh. The problems which for us had long since petrified into definite concepts, were still white-hot and full of vital interest for them. Our beaten tracks, so comfortable to tramp along, beset with moral railings and ethical fingerposts, had yet to be made for them. They were still fighting their way through the primeval forest towards the boundless and eternal verities. Nowhere could they see the steeples of certainty, the bridges of confidence: for them there was as yet no egress from the divine chaos of the primitive universe. Just as in recent days Lenin and Trotzky, so the men of those days felt that the world-order must be built anew; that was and is the incalculable significance of the Russian in relation to old Europe, fossilized in its ancient culture; for here was a whole nation agog with a pristine curiosity, eager to propound once again the vital questions, and to wring an answer from eternity. We had cooled down, had become indolent and were resting on our cultural laurels; they were still incandescent. So in Dostoeffsky's books, each character endeavours to review the old problems; each in turn, though his hands are bloodied by the task, removes the boundary stones between good and evil; each in turn transforms his own chaos into a world. Each possesses the attributes of a servant and a prophet of the new Christ, a martyr and a herald of the Third Realm. The chaos of the prime is still within each of them; but there is also the dawning glimmer of the first day, which was to bring light upon the earth; there are likewise premonitions of the sixth day, during which man was created. Dostoeffsky's characters are the pathfinders into another world, his

novels form the background to the mythus of the new men who are to be born of the Russian spirit.

A myth, however, and especially a national myth, needs faith to sustain it. These creatures cannot be grasped through the lucid medium of reason. Feelings, brotherly love, can alone find the way to understand them. To a man of common sense, to the practically minded Englishman or American, the four Karamazoffs must appear as so many types of madmen, as the inmates of a lunatic asylum built to house them by their begetter. For happiness, which is and ever must be the first and the last aim of one endowed with a healthy, simple, earthly nature, seems to these strange beings a matter of indifference. Open any one of the fifty thousand books which our western Europe produces year after year. What is their central theme? Happiness! A woman desires the man of her fancy, or someone wants to become rich, or to be placed in a position of power, or to be honoured; these wishes are all in the natural order of things. Dickens leads us to the charming little rose-clad cottage among verdant trees, the home where there is a bevy of children clustering round the hearth; Balzac's ideal is a castle, a title, and many millions. Let us look around us in the streets, the shops, the stuffy and foul slum dwellings, the palatial rooms of the wealthy; what do the crowds we see want? They all want to be happy, content, rich, powerful. Which of Dostoeffsky's characters has any desire for these things? Not one! They do not wish to rest anywhere; not even in a state of happiness. All of them yearn to go forward; they possess aspiring hearts, which never give them a moment's respite from self-torture. They are indifferent to happiness, indifferent even to content. Wealth seems to them despicable rather

than desirable. Strange beings that they are, they have no craving for the ordinary goods of this world, nor do they strive to attain the familiar goals aspired to by persons with common sense. For they have uncommon sense, and the everyday world is of no moment to them.

Are they, then, to be looked upon as phlegmatic, unconcerned, ascetic? Nothing of the sort. The persons of Dostoeffsky's novels are, let me repeat, men of a new beginning. For all the lucidity of their mental powers, for all their high gifts, they are at heart children, and have the desires of a child: they have no particular wishes, either for this specific thing or for that other; what they want is All. They would embrace all good and all evil, all heat and all cold, all those things which are close at hand and all those which are at an infinite distance. They are exaggerators, insatiable, exorbitant in their demands. I said that they want nothing of this world. But herein I erred. They want, let me reiterate, not one thing, but everything —all that is in the world's gift to bestow, all its emotions, all its depths: life itself, in full measure, heaped up, pressed down, and running over. No weaklings are they, not Lovelace, nor Hamlet, nor Werther, nor René: their muscles are hard, and they are filled with a fierce hunger for life; they are beasts of prey, Karamazoffs, who drain the cup to the dregs before dashing it to the ground. Above everything else they seek the superlative, a fiery glow of sensation which would consume the ordinary individual; they swim in the molten stream of world-feeling. Like a Malay who is running amuck, they storm forward into life, lapsing from concupiscence into repentance, turning from repentance back again to wrongdoing, speeding from crime into avowal, from avowal into ecstasy; thus they

rush along the highways and byways of their destiny, unflagging to the end, when they drop with foam upon their lips, or are struck down by an alien hand. How immense is their thirst for life! A youthful nation in its entirety, a new mankind, inspired with an eager appetence for knowledge and truth. Is there one single character in Dostoeffsky's works who breathes peacefully, who is at rest, who has achieved his goal? Not one. They are all of them engaged in a race towards the heights or towards the depths; for, as Alyosha tells us, he who has made the initial step cannot call a halt until he has reached the goal of his pilgrimage. They clutch and grab to right and to left, in frost or under scorching skies; their desires are insatiable, for they inhabit a finite world, and are ever striving to grasp the infinite. From the bowstring of their strength they are shot upward into the blue, and fly like arrows skyward, for ever in the direction of the unattainable, for ever aiming at the stars, each one of them a flame of unrest. Unrest is torture: and therefore all these beings of Dostoeffsky's creation suffer intensely; their faces are twisted with pain, they live in a state of feverish excitement, in a perpetual spasm. A famous Frenchman has described Dostoeffsky's world as "a hospital for neurotics"; and, when we first glimpse it, that is indeed the impression it arouses. How dreary and fantastic it seems. Taverns reeking of brandy, the cells of prisons, lairs in slum dwellings, brothels and pothouses! Emerging from a Rembrandtesque murk is a group of ecstatic faces: the murderer, raising hands stained with the blood of his victim; the toper, amid a grinning circle of appreciative cronies; the girl with the yellow license, lurking in the twilit alley; the epileptic child, begging at a street corner; the man in the Siberian katorga

who had killed seven people; the gambler pommelled by his comrades; the honest thief who lies dying upon a filthy bed—what an underworld of the emotions do they not all portray, what a veritable Hades of the passions! Tragical, indeed, are these beings; a typically Russian sky overhangs them, a lowering, grey, and crepuscular sky, darkening the landscape and weighing down the hearts of these poor mortals. It is a country of dire misfortune, a wilderness of despair, a purgatory whence there is no reprieve, wherein there is neither mercy nor justice.

Dark, labyrinthine, strange, inimical, does this Russian world appear when we first cross its frontier. It seems to be aflood with suffering, and the earth, as Ivan Karamazoff grimly observes, "is drenched with tears to its core." But just as Dostoeffsky's countenance at first gives the impression of being gloomy, strained, peasantlike, and depressed, though as soon as we catch sight of his radiant brow we find it suffuses the remainder of the face with light, relieving its features of all earthly blemishes and illuminating its shadows with faith—so in his works the heavy load of matter is suffused with spiritual fires. Dostoeffsky's world seems to be entirely composed of suffering; yet only to outward seeming does the sum of all the pains in his work appear to be greater than in that of any other author. For, being true children of Dostoeffsky's brain, these figures are able to transmute their feelings; they drive their emotions, and overdrive them, from contrast to contrast. Suffering, their own personal pain, is often their greatest felicity. Something labours within them to pit their voluptuousness, their lust for happiness, against their sorrow, their lust for pain; for their suffering is also their happiness, they hold to it tenaciously, they warm it at their breasts,

they fawn upon it with caressive fingers, they worship it with their whole soul. They would, indeed, be the unhappiest of mortals did they fail to love it.

This metamorphosis, this mad and frenzied metamorphosis, of emotion within them, this perpetual transmutation of values which goes on in the hearts of Dostoeffsky's figures, can perhaps be best illustrated by an example. I choose one that recurs in a thousand forms throughout his books: the grief caused by a humiliation—whether it be an actual or an imaginary humiliation matters little. Some simple-minded, sensitive creature, a lesser official, or, maybe, a general's daughter, is affronted. Pride has been mortified by a word, a mere nothing. This initial mortification constitutes the primary affect which brings the whole organism into revolt. The victim takes umbrage, suffers, lies in ambush awaiting other affronts. A second mortification inevitably occurs, and we witness a heaping-up of suffering. But, marvellous to relate, this accumulated suffering no longer causes pain. Of course the person thus affronted continues to lament; but the reason for such an outcry is no longer relevant, inasmuch as the mortification has already become an object of love. The enduring consciousness of having sustained an insult takes shape as an unnatural and secret gratification. The original mortification by which pride had suffered a fall has changed into something new: a sense of martyrdom. Now there sets in a craving for fresh mortifications, for more and ever more insults and affronts. A provocative attitude is assumed, a challenging tone creeps in: suffering has become a longing, a greed, a lust. "I have been humiliated? Very well, then, let me be completely abased!" This is the cry of these creatures, who know not where to stop. Henceforward

such a being clings to his suffering, clenching his teeth in the effort to prevent it escaping: anyone attempting to help him in his plight is looked upon as an enemy. Thus little Nelly throws the powder three times in the doctor's face, Raskolnikoff repulses Sonya's advances, Ilyuchka bites the kindly Alyosha's finger—and they do these things out of a fanatical love for their sufferings. They love their sufferings because they feel life (dear, precious life) therein; because they know that "here on earth one can only love truly and thoroughly by means of suffering"; and that is what they all desire, more than anything else life can give them. It is their strongest proof of existence: instead of "cogito, ergo sum," I think therefore I exist, they would take as their dictum, "I suffer, therefore I exist."

For Dostoeffsky, as for all his characters, "I am," "I exist," is the greatest triumph of life, the superlative sensation of belonging to the universe. Dmitri Karamazoff, in his prison cell, sings a hymn of praise on the subject of this "I exist," on the voluptuous pleasure of "existing"; and it is for the sake of this love of life that so much suffering is necessary. We see, therefore, that it is only on the surface of things that the sum total of suffering appears to be greater in Dostoeffsky's works than in those of any other author. For, if ever there was a world where nothing is inexorably fixed, where, from the deepest chasm, a path leads up to safety, where every misfortune culminates in ecstasy, where every despair is crowned with hope, then that world is Dostoeffsky's world. Are his works anything other than a series of acts of the apostles, of legends dealing with deliverance from suffering through the spirit, depicting conversion to a belief in life, describing a way of the cross that shall lead to knowledge? Is not each of

them a road to Damascus, transferred into the midst of our world?

These beings wrestle on behalf of ultimate truth, in order to discover their universally human ego. The fact that a murder is committed or that a woman is consumed with love matters little; such things are accessory, external. The real stage is set in the souls of men, in the realm of the spirit. Chance happenings in the outer world are no more than mechanical devices, scenic effects. The tragedy invariably takes place within the soul, and embodies a conquest over inhibitions and a battle on behalf of truth. Each one of Dostoeffsky's heroes is asking himself the questions that are occupying the mind of all Russians: "Who am I? What am I worth?" He seeks himself, or, rather, the superlative essence of himself, in the unstable, in the spaceless, in the timeless. He wishes to see himself as God sees him; he wishes to acknowledge himself. Truth is more than a mere need to him; it is an excess, a voluptuousness, an avowal of the most intimate of his pleasures; it is his spasm, his orgasm. The man who dwells in the domain of the spirit, the universal man, the god-man, breaks through all earthly bonds by means of confession; and attains to truth, that is, to God, by way of corporeal existence. How they luxuriate in their confessions! Loath to make avowal, like Raskolnikoff before Porfiry Petrovich, they would nevertheless make it in secret, and then again hide what they are longing to disclose. Anon, they'll cry it from the housetops, avowing more than is really true, discovering their nakedness with the morbidity of an exhibitionist, exaggerating their vices and their virtues. It is here, in these combats for the revelation of the genuine ego, that Dostoeffsky reaches his greatest intensity. Here, in the arena of the inner man,

the big tournaments take place. These are mighty epics of the heart, wherein what is purely Russian is purged away, and the tragedy broadens to include all mankind. The symbolical destiny of Dostoeffsky's figures then becomes explicit and staggering. Again and again, we live through the mystery of self-birth, of the myth created by Dostoeffsky himself: the birth of the new man from the universal humanity which resides in every pilgrim here below.

Self-birth; that is the word I have chosen wherewith to describe the advent of the new man in Dostoeffsky's cosmogony. I should like to tell the story of all Dostoeffsky's characters in the terms of this myth of his; for they all, in the last analysis, experience the same fate, no matter how differently their lives are shaped at the outset. Each of them lives a variation upon one and the same theme: the process of becoming man. We must never forget that Dostoeffsky's art aims at the core of things; and, in so far as his works are psychological studies, he contemplates the man in humanity, the absolute or abstract man who lies far beyond the planes of civilization. For most artists, these planes are still extant; the action of the ordinary novel takes place in a social, erotic, and conventional sphere, and remains there. Dostoeffsky, because he strives to reach the heart of things, pierces through to the universally human in mankind, to the ego which is common to us all. This "ultimate man" is for ever being constructed anew; and for ever the form of his mission is undergoing change.

Dostoeffsky's heroes start from identical beginnings. True to their Russian temperament, they are rendered uneasy by their own vital energy. During puberty, the period of mental and bodily awakening, their cheerful and

free sensibilities become clouded. They are dimly aware that a power is germinating within them, that a mysterious force is driving them on; something seems to be imprisoned, something that is growing, that is welling up and trying to escape from the garment of immaturity. An incomprehensible pregnancy (the new man is taking shape within them, but they know it not) renders them dreamy. They sit in dingy rooms "alone, till they verge on savagery"; by day and by night they brood, thinking about themselves. For years they will remain in this strange condition of ataraxia; like the fakirs, they will bow their heads in contemplation of their navel, trying to catch the sound of the foetal heart. They are prone to all the psychological symptoms characteristic of a woman with child: a hysterical dread of death, a panic fear of life, morbid and horrible cravings, perverse desires.

At length they come to realize that they are gravid with a new idea, and thenceforward their main endeavour is to unfold it. They sharpen their wits like scalpels, they dissect their condition, they vent their oppression in garrulity; they worry their brains until madness threatens; they weld their thoughts into a single, fixed idea, which remains with them till the end, becoming a weapon whose point they aim at their own breast. Kirilloff, Shatoff, Raskolnikoff, Ivan Karamazoff, each of these solitaries has "his own" idea: nihilism, or altruism, or Napoleonic megalomania; each has incubated his fantasy in morbid isolation. Some of them wish to be armed against this new man who is to spring from their loins; their pride cannot suffer him, and they would crush him if they could. Others, again, hope that by over-stimulation they may get the better of this importunate life-pang, may weary it into quiescence.

To keep to the metaphor: they endeavour to rid themselves of the fruit of their brain, just as women will deliberately fall down a flight of stairs, or dance riotously, or take some noxious drug, in the hope of escaping the burden of an unwanted baby. They rave, to drown the plashing of the wellspring of life; sometimes they even destroy themselves, in their eagerness to destroy the germ within. Of set purpose, during these years, they lose themselves. They drink, they gamble, they commit excesses, frantically, to the verge of sanity and beyond—they would not conform to Dostoeffsky's types were it otherwise.

What drives them into vicious paths is the urge of pain, not the prick of a thoughtless sensual appetite. They do not carouse in order to sink into a contented sleep, as the Germans are prone to do; they drink for the sake of intoxication, that they may forget their delusions. Gambling is a means for killing time, not for winning money; in choosing to wander down the road of depravity, they do not seek to gratify their lusts, but, in wanton indulgence, to escape from the confines of their own identity. None the less, being eager to know who or what they actually are, they plumb the depths of their own ego. From the furnace of their lusts they rise upward to God's throne, or sink to the level of beasts; but their constant aim is to discover their own essential humanity. Sometimes, since they are not sure of themselves, they find ways of testing their mettle. Thus Kolya, in order to prove that he is courageous, lies down between the rails and allows a train to roll over him; Raskolnikoff murders the old woman in order to prove that supermen, like Napoleon and himself, are not subject to the moral code which must regulate the doings of ordinary mortals; they all do more than they really

want to do, for each must experience the extremest intensity of feeling. If they are to fathom their own depths, if they are to be able to measure the greatness of their own humanity, they must plunge into every chasm: from sensuality they hurl themselves into depravity, from depravity into cruelty, and so on, downward into the nethermost abyss, a soulless region of ice and of deliberate wickedness. And they do all this out of a transmuted love and longing to know their own essential nature, out of a transmuted form of religious mania. From the haven of sagacity, they drift into the whirlpool of insanity; their mental curiosity degenerates into perversion, their crimes extend to include the violation of children and murder. Yet, paradoxically enough, while their pleasure is thus heightened, they suffer from inappetence; for, even while wallowing in the mire of corruption, they are already troubled by a feeling of contrition.

The more they overtax their senses and their brains, the nearer do they approach to the essence of themselves; and the greater their desire for self-annihilation, the quicker is likely to be their salvation. Their sad bacchanalian orgy was, after all, no more than a convulsive seizure; and their crimes were nothing but the spasm of self-birth. In destroying themselves, they merely do away with the husk enclosing the inner man; such self-destruction is in reality self-preservation in the highest sense of the term. The more they writhe and twist and excite themselves, the more (quite unconsciously) do they hasten the birth; for the new man can only be born in pain. Some strange and tremendous power must play the part of midwife in the hour of travail; goodness must come to their aid; they must be succoured by a love that embraces all mankind.

A concrete deed, an actual crime, one which stretches their senses to breaking-point and fills their hearts with despair, is needed if purity is to be born into the world; and in this case, as in real life, every birth is shadowed by mortal danger. Death and life, those two extremes of human experience, clasp hands in the perilous second when a new being first sees the light.

Such, then, is Dostoeffsky's mythus: the individual ego, a compost of dim and amorphous ingredients, is impregnated with the seed of the true man, that archetypal being of mediæval philosophy who is exempt from the taint of original sin. From each one of us the primal and absolutely divine essence can be born. It is our highest task, our supreme earthly duty, to bring forth this primal and everlasting man from the loins of the contemporary civilized human being. Each of us is already fecundated, for none of us repels life; every mortal here on earth has lovingly received the seed in some blissful moment; but not all those who have been fertilized have allowed the fruit to ripen. Many, being spiritually slothful, have suffered it to rot; the seed has putrefied within them, and poisons those who have left it to perish. Others, again, succumb during labour, and only the child, the idea, is launched upon the world. Kirilloff is such a one; he has to kill himself in order to remain leal: Shatoff is another; he is murdered, that he may testify to the truth within him.

But others, the heroic figures in these novels, are triumphantly successful in their travail. Father Zosima, Raskolnikoff, Stepanovich, Rogozhin, Dmitri Karamazoff, kill their social ego, the larval self, that, like butterflies, they may flutter upward leaving the dead pupa-case behind; from creeping insects they transform themselves into ima-

goes; earthbound creatures become inmates of the skies. The hard crust of psychical inhibitions breaks, and the soul, the universally human soul, emerges and soars back into the infinite. All that was personal and individual fades away, with the result that in the hour of fulfilment these figures resemble one another so closely as to be scarcely distinguishable. Alyosha is hardly to be recognized as different from Zosima, Karamazoff as different from Raskolnikoff, when they step forth from their crimes, their faces still wet with tears, into the light of a new day. Each of Dostoeffsky's novels ends with a catharsis, an emotional cleansing such as we find in Greek tragedy: this is the great atonement. Above the thunder-clouds, in the fresh and sweet atmosphere that follows the storm, flames a glorious rainbow, the Russian emblem of atonement.

Not until they have given birth to the true man, are Dostoeffsky's heroes allowed to enter the true community. Balzac's heroes triumph when they at last conquer society; Dickens's heroes attain their apogee when they settle down into their proper sphere of activity, into the life of a respectable citizen, when they found a family, and are successful in their careers. But the community towards which Dostoeffsky's heroes converge, is no longer social; it has, rather, the attributes of a religious community; these beings do not seek "society"; what they are in search of is world brotherhood. In that brotherhood, hierarchy as ordinarily understood has ceased to exist, for the only gradations are in the degree to which true inwardness, and therefore mystical community, has been achieved. It is of such beings that his novels have to tell. The social community, with its laodicean prides and hates, is an intermediate stage, and is vanquished: the individual man has become universal man;

his aloofness, his segregation, which were nothing but manifestations of pride, have been done away with; in unending humbleness, his heart aglow with love, he greets the brother, the essential man, in each of those he now encounters. These purified men no longer feel that there are any class distinctions; their souls, naked as in paradise, know not shame, or pride, or hatred, or contempt. Criminals and harlots, murderers and saints, princes and drunkards, they hold frank converse in the sphere of essential being, talking heart to heart and soul to soul. One thing alone differentiates them in Dostoeffsky's mind: how far they have attained their innermost and veritable selves, how far they have advanced along the road to a sterlingly genuine humanity. It is a matter of indifference to him how his characters have achieved expiation, how they have won to possession of their real selves. Depravity does not tarnish, crime does not corrupt; there exists, under God, no other tribunal than the conscience. Justice and injustice, good and evil: such words are consumed in the fires of suffering. He whose will is pointed towards truth, finds his atonement: for he who is true, is humble. He who has made open avowal, understands all: for he knows "that the laws formulated by the minds of men are unproven and enigmatic, and that, just as there are no absolutely reliable doctors of medicine, so there are likewise no infallible judges"; he knows that either no man is guilty or else all are, none is entitled to judge another, each is only a brother among brethren. In Dostoeffsky's cosmos, therefore, we find no hopelessly abandoned wretch, no hell with its lowest circle à la Dante, a hell whence Christ himself cannot deliver those who are condemned to suffer its torments. Purgatory he recognizes; and he knows that an erring mor-

tal is filled with finer ardours and is nearer to the true man than the proud, cold, and perfectly mannered gentleman, in whose breast the true man has become congealed to a law-abiding citizen. Dostoeffsky's "true men" have struggled, and have thereby acquired reverence for suffering: consequently, the ultimate terrestrial mysteries are laid bare to them. One who has suffered becomes a brother through sympathetic understanding; and none of Dostoeffsky's characters knows what it is to be shocked; for each only looks at the inner being, at the brother in his neighbour. They possess that sublime faculty which Dostoeffsky tells us is peculiar to the Russian, namely, the incapacity to hate for any length of time; having this, they likewise possess an inexhaustible faculty for understanding all things terrestrial. Agreed, they often quarrel and wrangle with one another; frequently they even torture one another; this is because they are ashamed of their love, because they consider their humility a sign of weakness, and have as yet no inkling that these qualities constitute the most formidable power man has at his disposal. Yet the inner voice informs them of the truth. In the very act of hurling invectives at one another and confronting each other as foes, the eyes of the inner man are looking forth comprehendingly, and his lips are meeting those of his opponent in a fraternal kiss. For the naked and everlasting man in each of them has recognized his peer in his fellow-disputant; and this mystery of universal reconciliation in brotherly identification, this orphic song of the spirit, accounts for the lyrical outbursts we hear ever and anon amid the gloomy music of Dostoeffsky's novels.

REALISM AND FANTASY

How can I find anything more fantastic than reality?

DOSTOEFFSKY

TRUTH, the immediate reality of their own circumscribed existence, is what Dostoeffsky's characters are in search of: truth, the immediate actuality of the All, is likewise the aim of Dostoeffsky, the artist. He is a realist, and is logical in his realism, carrying his argument to its final conclusion, in a remote region where forms become so strangely similar to their reflexions and their opposites that, for those who are used to contemplating everyday things, these realities appear fantastic. "I love realism even up to the point where it merges into the fantastic," writes Dostoeffsky; "and, indeed, how can I find anything more fantastic, more unexpected, and, even, more improbable, than reality?" In fact, for Dostoeffsky as for no other artist to the same degree, truth takes its place, not behind, but side by side with probability. Truth lies beyond the vision of those who are uninformed as to psychological phenomena: just as to the untrained eye a drop of water will appear a translucent unity, whilst to the expert, looking at it through a microscope, it will be a manifold complexity, a cosmos containing myriads of infusoria; so, in a world where ordinary folk can see nothing but the obvious and the homogeneous, the artist, endowed with a higher realism, discerns hidden

truths which seem to conflict with the manifest verities.

It was Dostoeffsky's passion to discover these profounder truths which lie far beneath the surface of things—so deep, indeed, that they are adjacent to the core of existence. He wishes to contemplate man as a unity and at the same time as a complexity, as homogeneous and yet heterogeneous. Thus his imaginative and penetrating realism, endowed as it is with both the magnifying power of a microscope and the clarifying insight and understanding of the seer, is as wide as the poles asunder from what the French look upon as the first essential in realistic and naturalistic art. For though Dostoeffsky pushes his analyses farther and is more precise in his deductions than any who dub themselves "logical naturalists" (by which term they mean to imply that they pursue their analyses to the end, whereas Dostoeffsky, as I have already pointed out, having reached the end, goes beyond!), yet his psychology hails from a different sphere of the creative spirit. The exact naturalism of the Zola school is the child of science. The introspective psychology which characterizes it has been imported into literature from another sphere, and carries with it an inseparable aroma of diligent study and investigation. Flaubert, in the retort of his brain, distils two thousand books in the Bibliothèque Nationale in order to get atmosphere, or local colour, for his *Tentation de saint Antoine* or his *Salammbô*. Before Zola embarks upon the writing of a novel, he spends many months, notebook in hand, observing, scribbling, eavesdropping in the Bourse, or in factories and workshops, in order to collect models and materials for his tales. The reality portrayed is cold, obvious, foreseen. These authors observe things with the physical eye, with the deliberate and calculating scrutiny of a

photographer. They collect, and order, and mix, and distil, the discrete elements of life; they are the sober scientists of art, and cultivate a chemistry of integration and disintegration.

Dostoeffsky's methods of observation are indissolubly linked with the daimonic. Whilst for Zola and Flaubert art is a science, in Dostoeffsky's hands it becomes the black art; if the Frenchmen are savants, the Russian is a magician. He does not pursue the calling of an experimental chemist, but, rather, that of an alchemist; he does not study the astronomy but the astrology of the mind. He is no self-possessed investigator; but, confirmed dreamer that he is, he gazes hallucinated into the immensity of life, his condition bordering upon the anguish of a nightmare. Nevertheless, owing to the range and flexibility of his visual powers, his cursory observations are far more complete than the systematic studies of those others. He does not collect materials, and yet he has everything he needs. Though he makes no elaborate calculations, his results are infallible. His seer's insight guides him to a diagnosis; and without having had to finger a pulse, he is able to discern the mysterious cause of the malady. His knowledge is spun from the gossamer of dreams; his art is woven on a magic loom. He cuts through the rind of life, and sucks the sweet, refreshing juice from out its pulp. The master-gift of imaginative insight, of empathy, enables him to excel all other realists in the truthfulness of his reality. Faust redivivus, at the most elusive sign, he grasps the world. A fleeting glance, and he has mastered every detail of the picture.

But here is another point in which he contrasts with the French realists. He never troubles his readers with minutiæ, and yet without them he conveys the most vivid of

images. Let us call to mind the great figures he has created: Raskolnikoff, Alyosha and Fedor Karamazoff, Myshkin, all those men who seem to us so actual and alive. Where has he ever given us a detailed portrait of them? Three strokes of the brush suggest their contours; a distinctive word depicts their personality; a few simple prases make plain their features. Age, calling, status, clothing, the colour of their hair, their physiognomies, everything that might seem of importance for the conveyance of personality, he gives us in the most abbreviated shorthand. And yet, how deeply each one of these figures is graven in our thoughts. Compare this inspired realism with the precise portraits drawn by the "logical naturalists." Zola, ere he started writing, drew up a memorandum containing the most finical details concerning the life and antecedents of those who were to pass the threshold of his novels. We can peruse these extraordinary documents today. He gives us every inch of the stature, counts the number of teeth, enumerates the warts on the cheeks, strokes the beard to learn whether the hair be harsh or silky, feels the nails, knows the quality of the voice and the way of breathing; he follows up the family tree to learn the good and the bad inheritance of his characters; goes to the bank to inform himself regarding their income and expenditure. Indeed he weighs and measures everything that lends itself to concrete manipulation. Yet as soon as the figure begins to move upon the stage of his writings, its unity is destroyed, its artificial cohesion dissolves. Its spiritual homogeneity proves fortuitous; its professed reality is unreal; and we never get the illusion that we are looking at a living human creature.

This is the essential error of that kind of art. The writ-

ers of the French realist school provide at the outset of their books an exact depiction of their characters in repose, in a state of spiritual lethargy. These portraits have, therefore, no more vitality than a death-mask. We are shown, not the vigorous movement of life, but the stasis of the last sleep. Where these realists stop, there the great naturalist, Dostoeffsky, begins. His characters do not come to life until they are excited, are filled with passion, have to face a tense moment. Whereas those other authors endeavour to convey an impression of the spiritual by describing the bodily attributes, Dostoeffsky builds up the body by way of the soul. Not until the passions distort or illumine the features of his characters, not until their eyes are dimmed with tears, not until the mask of respectable calm and spiritual frigidity has fallen from them, do his portraits come to life. Dostoeffsky, the seer, does not settle down to the task of moulding his figures until they of themselves begin to glow.

There is nothing casual about Dostoeffsky's seemingly vague beginnings. We pass through the doorway of his novels as if we were entering a darkened room. Only outlines are visible, only the whisper of voices can be heard, we know not who is present or who is speaking. Gradually, however, the eye grows accustomed to the obscurity; shapes appear; as from the mysterious shadows of Rembrandt's early canvases, the figures emerge and are flooded with spiritual efflux. These shades must burn with passion ere they can tread into the light, their nerves must be on the stretch ere the vibrations can be heard. In Dostoeffsky's creations, "only around the soul does the body take shape; only around a passion, the picture." Not until they glow, not until they become strangely heated as in a fever, do we feel the power of his amazing realism; then only does he

set out on his magical hunt for details; then only does he scrutinize every gesture, digging out laughter from its burrow, following the perverted feelings into their lair, dogging each thought until he brings it to earth in the twilit realm of the unconscious. Every movement acquires plasticity under his hands, every idea becomes crystal clear; the further these souls are chased into the action of the drama, the mightier is their radiation from within and the more transparent do they become. The morbid, the hypnotic, the ecstatic, and the epileptic, are depicted with the precision of a clinical diagnosis, with the definite outline of a geometrical figure. He misses no nuance, be it of the most delicate; not the faintest oscillation escapes him. Precisely at the point where most artists hesitate, where their senses are dulled by the effulgence of a supra-terrestrial realm, where, dazzled, they close their eyes, Dostoeffsky's realism begins to feel at home. And when the limits of the possible are reached, when knowledge verges on madness, and when passion assumes the attributes of crime, then do we experience the unforgettable moments of his works. Let us recall the figure of Raskolnikoff: he is not graven in our minds as slouching along the street, or as a medical student of twenty-five, sitting in his room, or as a being possessed of these characteristics or those peculiarities; what we perceive is the dramatic instant when the passionate and erring youth, his hands trembling, cold drops of perspiration beading his brow, makes his way up the staircase of the house where he has murdered the old woman and her sister, and when, in an uncanny trance, vividly experiencing anew the hideous and agonizing sensation he had felt on the night of the crime, shuddering with satisfaction, he pulls the bell of his victim's flat, then again, then a third

time. We see Dmitri Karamazoff passing through the purgatorial fires of his trial, passionate and furious, madly thumping the table with his fist, as he protests: "I am not guilty of my father's blood!" Dostoeffsky's people take on bodily shape in such moments of tense excitement, at the climax of emotion. Just as Leonardo in his magnificent caricatures depicts the grotesque and abnormal physique, when the body transgresses the limits of the habitual, so does Dostoeffsky portray the souls of men in the moments when man inclines to overstep the bounds of the possible. Intermediate states, compromise, harmony, are hateful to him: solely by the extraordinary, the unexpected, the elemental, is his artistic passion stirred to the task of realist portrayal. He is an incomparable manipulator of the clay of the unusual, he is one of the finest anatomists of the overwrought and sickly soul.

What is the instrument which enables Dostoeffsky to penetrate to these depths of human nature? The spoken word! Goethe depicts by means of his visualizing faculty. He is—Wagner drew the finest distinction between these different means of expression—essentially an optical being, whereas Dostoeffsky is an aural being. He has to hear his people speak, to let us hear them speak, so that they may become palpably present to us. Merezhkoffsky, in his profound analysis of Russia's two greatest writers, is justified in saying that Tolstoy makes us hear because he has made us see, whereas Dostoeffsky makes us see because he has made us hear. So long as his men and women have not spoken, they remain shadowy beings. Speech is the dew which fecundates their souls. Like strange blossoms, they open out their hearts to us as they speak, showing us their colours, their pollen, and the seed in the pod. They are warmed into

life by discussion, are awakened from their torpor by speech; and it is only when they have been thus roused that Dostoeffsky cares to lavish his artistry upon them. He conjures words out of their souls, so that in the end he may hold their souls within his grasp. His psychological penetration is, when all's said and done, nothing but an uncommonly fine aural perception. In the literature of the whole world we find no more complete and plastic portrayal of men than in the words of Dostoeffsky. The manner in which the words are arranged in the sentence is symbolical, the structure of the language is characteristic: nothing is left to chance. Every disjointed syllable, every interrupted tone, is necessary on its own account. Every pause, every repetition, every breathing space, every stammer, is momentous; for always beneath the outward sounds of speech we hear the murmur of subterranean currents. The torrential impetus of the soul finds an outlet in words. The conversations in Dostoeffsky's works disclose, not only that which his characters say and desire to say, but likewise that which they would prefer to leave unrevealed. And the inspired realism of spiritual hearing informs every syllable with a mysterious power: whether the words are the incoherent ramblings of a drunkard, or fall from the ecstatic lips of an epileptic just before the seizure, or come from the lying mouth of a debauchee. From the reek of heated discourse, the soul aspires upward; and slowly out of the soul the body is formed. Hardly knowing how to account for what we see, above the fog of words, amid the hashish fumes of the narrative, the vision of the speaker arises and takes shape. What others achieve by diligently fitting in the pieces as in a mosaic, by colouring, by draughtsmanship, by conciseness, Dostoeffsky achieves by words. So soon as we

have heard them speak, we see his characters as plainly as in the vision of a dream. The author need not trouble to descibe them, for we ourselves, hypnotized by their words, become visionaries.

One example will suffice to show what I mean. In *The Idiot*, the old general, a pathological liar, walks up and down with Prince Myshkin telling his reminiscences. He starts by lying, slips ever deeper into the quagmire of falsehood, and winds up by sticking in the bog altogether. He talks, and talks, and talks. His lies fly beyond all bounds, like those of the liar in Kryloff's fable.

Dostoeffsky gives us no line of personal description; yet from the general's words, from his hesitations, his splutterings, his nervous gabbling, as he walks to and fro by Myshkin's side, from the way he glances cautiously up at his companion to see whether what he says is raising a doubt, from the manner in which he comes to a halt in his stride hoping the prince will break in upon his discourse, from all this and much more besides, we form a detailed picture in our minds as to the kind of man we have to do with. I can see the sweat breaking out on his forehead, can see his face, so elated at the start, becoming more and more crumpled with anxiety, can see how he slinks back into himself like a guilty dog which fears a whipping; I can also see the prince, conscious of the inclination to prevaricate dormant within himself, and yet keeping the tendency well under control. Where, however, is this description to be found in the novel? Nowhere. Yet for me every line in the two men's faces is as plain as a pikestaff. Somewhere in all this speechifying must lurk the arcanum of the wizard who makes us see visions; maybe it lies in the modulations of the voice, or in the position of the words.

So full of witchery is this art of depiction, that even in translation we can still catch the essence of these people in their speech. For the entire character of Dostoeffsky's figures is condensed into the rhythm of their talk. This condensation is often achieved by some petty detail; a syllable will suffice. When we are told that old Fedor Karamazoff, having addressed an envelope to Grushenka, has added "for my little chicken," we cannot but see the face of the senile debauchee, see his bad teeth, and the saliva dribbling over the leering lips. Again, in *The House of the Dead*, we are given the picture of a sadistic officer who watches a convict being flogged, and keeps on shouting to the man who plies the scourge: "Harder, harder!" In this one word is conveyed to us the whole character of the onlooker. We picture him sobbing with brutal eagerness, his eyes aflame, his face red, gasping for breath as he gives way to his evil passion.

These tiny realistic details move us to the soul, and conjure us into an unfamiliar world; they constitute Dostoeffsky's most carefully chosen means for expressing his art, and are at the same time the greatest triumph of intuitive realism over systematic naturalism. He is not spendthrift of such details; he introduces one where others would introduce a hundred; he saves them up for special occasions and surprises us with the use of them just at the moment of highest ecstasy when they are least expected. With unfaltering hand he pours the gall of earthliness into the chalice of ecstasy; for him, truth and reality consist in being anti-romantic and anti-sentimental. Nor must we forget that Dostoeffsky is not only the captive of his own duality, but also its missionary. In art as in life he desires to bring extremes together, to wed the most horrible, naked, cold, and

foul reality with the noblest and sublimest dreams. He wishes us to find the divine in all things earthly; to discover in reality, fantasy; in sublimity, vulgarity; in transcendental spirit, the bitter salt of this world; and he wants us to experience these contrasted states and emotions simultaneously. We are to enjoy in two conflicting ways, just as he feels in two conflicting ways; there is to be neither harmony nor compromise. Everywhere in his works we find these dismemberings of the emotions, diabolic details, which shatter the sublimest situations, and mercilessly display the banality underlying the holiest things of life. I will make my point clear by recalling a passage from *The Idiot*. Rogozhin has killed Nastasya Filipovna; he meets Myshkin in the street, touches the prince's elbow, calls him: Brother. They speak in whispers. They make their way to the house, Myshkin atremble with foreboding. A premonition of something great and solemn overwhelms us as the young men go up the stairs to Rogozhin's rooms. The lifelong foes, brethren in feeling, enter the study. Nastasya Filipovna lies dead on the bed. A conviction that these two men are about to have a heart-to-heart talk over the body of the woman who has kept them apart surges up within the reader's consciousness. At last the talk begins, and the heavens are blotted out by the naked, brutal, all-consuming earthliness and devilishness of the facts. Rogozhin wonders whether the body will smell; he explains that he has covered it with American oilcloth, good American oilcloth, has pulled the sheet over it, and has bought four jars of deodorant.

Gruesome details of this sort seem to me to have a sadistic and satanistic flavour, for the realism they express is more than mere technical artistry, it partakes of the nature

of metaphysical revenge; it is, so to say, a vent for secret voluptuousness, and an outlet for a sardonic sense of disillusionment. Four jars. The mathematical precision of the statement! American oilcloth. These are deliberately introduced to bring discord into the spiritual harmony; they are grisly revolts against the unity of the emotions. Truth exceeds its own truthfulness, becoming vicious and torturing; and the grim descent from the heavens into the foul chasm of reality would make those books intolerable were it not for the soaring contrasts of spiritual ecstasy he is able to juxtapose.

From a "society" standpoint, Dostoeffsky's is a worm-eaten cosmos, in close proximity to the cesspools of life, within the dreariest spheres of poverty and wretchedness. Fierce opponent of all that savours of romanticism or sentimentality, he deliberately sets the scene of his drama amid the banalities of existence. Dirty pothouses, stinking of stale beer and spirits; stuffy rooms, "narrow as coffins," separated by no more than a wooden partition; seldom does he lead us into drawing-rooms, hotels, palaces, or comfortable offices. It is of set purpose that, outwardly, his characters are "uninteresting"; he gives us consumptive women, down-at-heel students, ne'er-do-wells, spendthrifts, idlers; but those who cut a figure in society are ignored. And it is amid the dreary monotony of everyday happenings that he depicts the greatest tragedies of the epoch. Fantastically enough, the magnificent arises out of the paltry; and it is this contrast between exterior jejuneness and spiritual intoxication, between exiguous surroundings and amplitude in the realm of the heart's emotions, that imparts so magical an atmosphere to his world. Befuddled topers in a drinking booth prophesy the advent of the Third King-

dom; the saintly Alyosha tells the profoundest of legends, what time a wench sits upon his knee; in brothels and gambling haunts, the apostolates of good arise; and the grandest scene in *Crime and Punishment*, the one in which Raskolnikoff, the murderer, drops to the ground to kiss Sonia's foot, bowing down before all the sufferings of humanity, takes place, where? In the barnlike room of a harlot who has hired this grotesque lodging from the stuttering tailor Kapernaumoff.

Alternating streams of cold or hot, hot or cold (but never lukewarm), course through the channels of the passionate life he creates; we seem to be living in the world of the Apocalypse. Side by side, in a frenzy of contrasts, are disclosed the sublime and the ridiculous; and we are hunted from unrest to unrest, till our emotions are jangled. Dostoeffsky never allows us a moment's respite; we are never permitted to enjoy the luxury of quiet reading; our breathing is not to be orderly and rhythmical, but jerky and spasmodic as if electric shocks were being administered; we are goaded on from page to page, growing hotter, more uneasy, more devoured by curiosity. So long as we are in this creator's power, we assume certain attributes of the author. Being himself a creature cloven in twain, a man for ever crucified upon the cross of duality, he infuses his characters with the same duplexity and destroys the unity of feeling in his readers likewise.

The peculiar quality of his exposition resides in this power, and it would be detrimental to his genius to describe it as his "technique." That is essentially a craftsman's expression. Dostoeffsky's art flows out from the core of his personality, from the primal cleavage in his emotional make-up. His world is composed of truth and mystery;

but at the same time it is a prophetic recognition of reality, knowledge, and magic. The most incomprehensible appears comprehensible, the most comprehensible seems beyond our ken. If the problems he confronts us with verge on the limits of the possible, still they never attain the region of the utterly formless. His characters remain real in this sense—that they always have their roots firmly struck into the soil of Mother Earth, that they never become mere shadows. The creatures Dostoeffsky portrays are known by him to the innermost fibres of their being. He fathoms their dreams, rummages among their passions, sifts their drunkenness. Not an iota of their spiritual substance eludes him; nor does their least thought escape his notice. Link by link, he forges his psychological chain upon the limbs of the captives of his art. He never commits a psychological error; nor is there any entanglement which his unerring logic cannot unravel. A clash with the inner truth is unknown to him. What an amazing edifice his art and vision conjure up! The dialectical dispute between Porfiry Petrovich and Raskolnikoff, the scientific upbuilding of crime, the tortuous logic of the Karamazoff family; all this is an architectonic of the spirit, unparalleled, flawless as mathematics, as full of reverberations as music, combining the highest powers of the mind with the seerlike insight of the soul, so as to attain to a profounder truth, to verities more far-reaching than have ever yet been vouchsafed to man.

Yet why, in spite of such an essentially complete portrayal of the truth, do Dostoeffsky's works, do these fundamentally earthly and at the same time unearthly works, give us the feeling that we are looking into a world that lies outside our own, above and beyond the world we

know? Why, as we enter into this world, do we feel shaken to the soul, and, at the same time, feel that it is a world we are strangers to? Why do we feel as if all his novels were lit by artificial light, and as if we had been spirited into a realm filled with hallucinations and dreams? Why do his external realities appear to us rather as somnambulistic effects than as manifestations of reality? Why, despite the heated, nay the over-heated, condition of the atmosphere, do we never feel the fruitful warmth of the sun? Why do we never see the sun, but only a kind of chill aurora suffusing the skies? Why do these truest of true presentations of life seem somehow or other as if they had nothing to do with life itself, with life as we know it?

Let me try to answer. Dostoeffsky's works will bear comparison with all that is most imperishable and exalted in the world's literature. The tragedy of the Karamazoffs is no whit less imposing than the tragedy of Orestes, than the Homeric epics, or the splendid creations of Goethe. These others are, perhaps, simpler, more unpretentious, less rich in knowledge, and of smaller import for the future than are Dostoeffsky's. On the other hand they are gentler, and bring more balsam to the soul. They act as liberators of the feelings; whereas Dostoeffsky's give nothing but knowledge. I think those other tragedies and epics owe much of their charm to the fact that they are not exclusively human in scope, but are celestial as well. They are set in a framework of heavenly radiance, there is a breath of flowery meadows about them, a glimpse of stars in the skies, where the feelings can spread wings to fly freely and unafraid. In the midst of the Homeric combats, during the bloodiest of frays, we are granted the boon of a few lines of description that waft a fresh breeze of salt-laden wind

from the sea to our lips; the silvery sheen of the Grecian landscapes floods the battleground with light, and emotionally we realize that the most shattering of these human fights is no more than a puny revolt against the eternal order of things. One heaves a sigh of relief, as if one were delivered from the sadness of this mortal coil. Even Faust has his Easter Sunday, is able to throw off his personal sorrow, consigning it to nature's deeps; he tosses his delight into the springtime of the world. In all these works we are led to the bosom of nature, there to find release from the world of men. But Dostoeffsky fails to provide any such outlet. The cosmos he shows us is not the all-embracing universe, but the narrower realm where man lives and suffers. Dostoeffsky is deaf to music, blind to pictures, dumb before a landscape: he is made to pay for his astounding knowledge of human psychology by a total indifference to nature and to art. And everything that is purely human is veiled in a mist of inaccessibility. For him, God dwells exclusively in the soul; there is no god in things. Dostoeffsky lacks the precious kernel of pantheism which makes both German and Hellenic literature so happy and so liberating. The scene for all his works is set in stuffy rooms, in miry streets, in reeking taverns; they are pervaded by a human, all-too-human atmosphere; no sweet winds sweep across to ventilate and refresh; we are never reminded of the coming and going of the seasons. Try to recall if in any of his great works, whether in *Crime and Punishment*, or in *The Idiot*, or in *The Brothers Karamazoff*, or in *A Raw Youth*, we are given an idea of the time of year when or the kind of landscape amid which the action takes place. During summer? Or spring? Or autumn? Maybe the fact is mentioned. But we are not made to feel it as a concrete reality. The action

takes place in the dark recesses of the heart, which are from time to time illuminated by a lightning-flash of perception; it takes place within the airless spaces of the brain; it lacks stars and blossoms; it is void of both stillness and silence. The air is always heavy with the effluvium of great cities. Nowhere can we find rest from the all-pervading humanity these works portray, no blissful relaxation such as is granted to man when, forgetful of himself and his troubles, he turns his attention to the non-sentient and passionless spheres without. This is the seamy side of Dostoeffsky's works. His figures emerge from a grey background of misery and tenebrous vacuity; they do not stand forth freely and clearly in the world of things, but for ever remain in an eternity of pure feeling. His sphere is a spiritual world, it is not nature; his universe is mankind, mankind alone.

Even the human beings he depicts, though each individual is so authentic, so flawless in respect of logical organization, are in their totality unreal; they are such stuff as dreams are made of, and they stalk through the boundless spaces as if they were no more than shades. Yet, despite the sense of unreality thus conveyed, these figures have a higher truth that is all their own. They are true because their creator's psychological acumen is unerring; they are unreal, because they are not compounded of flesh and blood but of thoughts and feelings. They never become tangible. On the many thousand pages of his works, how seldom does Dostoeffsky tell us that his characters sit down, or that they eat and drink; always they are in the act of feeling, or speaking, or fighting. They neither sleep—though they often seem to move in a making dream—nor seek repose; they are always in a fever, always thinking. They are never

vegetative, plantlike, or, like the animals, enjoying a moment of torpor; always they are restless, excited, tense; always they are awake. Awake, exaggeratedly awake. Constantly at the highest point of existence. All of them, like their creator, are equipped with powers of perspicacious observation; they are every one of them seers, telepathic, and subject to hallucinations; they are all endowed with pythian or prophetic faculties; and every one of them is a psychologist to his finger-tips.

In ordinary life most men are in conflict one with another and with fate, because they do not understand, because they are endowed with no more than an earthly comprehension. Shakespeare, also a great psychologist, bases half his tragedies upon this innate lack of penetration, upon this fundamental obtuseness, which severs us so hopelessly one from another. Lear mistrusts his daughter Cordelia because he fails to realize the quality of her generosity and the magnitude of the love hidden behind her reserve; Othello takes Iago as his confidant; Cæsar loves Brutus, who is to be his assassin; all are true to their earthly inheritance, all are prey to delusion. In Shakespeare's plays, as in real life, misunderstanding is the main cause of tragedy, is the ultimate source of conflict. But Dostoeffsky's characters know too much ever to succumb to misunderstanding. They have no veils for one another; they understand one another, can penetrate into one another's depths, can read one another's thoughts, and foresee one another's words. They are on the scent of the quarry almost before the hunt is up; they never miss the trail, are never taken unawares; each individual soul runs the other's meaning to earth with mysterious precision. The unconscious and the subconscious are hypertrophied. All these figures are en-

dowed with second sight, for Dostoeffsky has transferred to them his own mysterious faculties of perception.

Let me give an illustration. Nastasya Filipovna is murdered by Rogozhin. She knows that she belongs to him from the first moment she sets eyes on him; she shuns him because of this knowledge; she returns to him because she longs for her destiny to be fulfilled. Months beforehand, she makes acquaintance with the knife that is to pierce her breast. Rogozhin, too, knows this same knife; Myshkin likewise. The prince's lips tremble when, one day, while he is talking to Rogozhin, the latter plays with the knife. We have the same kind of foreknowledge of Fedor Karamazoff's end. Father Zosima falls on his knees because he anticipates the crime which is to take place; even the shallow and cunning fool Rakitin can read the portents heralding the deed. Alyosha kisses his father's shoulder on bidding farewell; his feelings warn him that he will see the old man alive no more. Ivan goes off to Chermashnya that he may avoid witnessing the crime. Smerdyakoff, the mean, contemptible rascal, knows what is coming. Indeed they all have a premonition of the hour when and the place where the fateful deed is to be done. All are prophets, all have foreknowledge, all are gifted with second sight.

For the artist, truth always has two aspects, one superficial and one profound; and in Dostoeffsky's case the second, the profounder, aspect was psychological. Although he possessed a deeper knowledge of men's souls than any before him, yet Shakespeare had a profounder acquaintance with mankind. The English dramatist recognized the complexity of existence, saw how the trivial and the commonplace are continually interlinked with the sublime. But Dostoeffsky sent all his creations questing for the infinite.

Shakespeare knew the world in the flesh; Dostoeffsky knew it in the spirit. The latter's world is, perhaps, the most perfect hallucination of the world, a deeper and more prophetic dream, far transcending reality, for it is a reality which has soared away into the realm of fantasy. This super-realist, this transgressor of every boundary, never portrayed the actual; what he did was to push the real into spheres beyond the real.

Thus we see that the world of Dostoeffsky's artistic creation is limned from the viewpoint of the spirit; it is a world of the inner life; it is redeemed from within. This kind of art, the profoundest known to mankind, has no precedent in the field of letters, either in Russia or elsewhere. But though actual forerunners are lacking, it has kindred in the art of earlier times. In Greek tragedy, for instance, there is an undercurrent of convulsive misery, an excessive amount of suffering among the men who twist and turn in the hands of an implacable destiny; in Michelangelo there is a mystical, stony, insoluble sadness of spirit. But among the artists of all the ages it is to Rembrandt that Dostoeffsky bears the most unmistakable resemblance. Both these men endured a life of toil and privation; both of them were despised and rejected; and both, through penury, were forced to taste the lees of human misery. Both experienced the relentless struggle between light and darkness, thus learning the creative implications lying ambushed in contrasts, and becoming aware that no beauty can excel that of the saintliness which is the expression of a life of deprivation. Dostoeffsky's holy ones are Russian peasants, criminals, gamblers; Rembrandt finds the models for his biblical personages among the riff-raff of the ports: both feel that in the basest forms of life a new and mys-

terious loveliness is concealed; both find their Christ among the dregs of humanity. Both recognize the constant interplay of earthly forces, of light and darkness; they know that these actions and reactions are no less vigorously at work in the sphere of terrestrial life than in the celestial sphere where the spirit has shaken off earthly trappings; and that, in body and in spirit alike, all that pertains to light is wrung from the ultimate darkness of life itself. The deeper we penetrate into Rembrandt's pictures or into Dostoeffsky's books, the easier it becomes to solve the riddle of earthly and of spiritual forms, the answer to which is: universal humanity. And where, at first, we discern only shadowy shapes, and see no more than a pale reflexion of reality, after a while we perceive, with the informed pleasure of him who has won his way to the light, the holy sheen which, like a martyr's crown, forms an aureole around life's last things.

ARCHITECTURE AND PASSION

Que celui aime peu, qui aime la mesure!
LA BOËTIE

"You drive everything till it becomes a passion," says Nastasya Filipovna; and her dictum strikes at Dostoeffsky's heart no less accurately than it strikes at the heart of all his characters. He can only approach the phenomena of existence in passionate mood; and his intensest passion is reserved for the thing he loves above all else: art. It goes without saying that the creative process, the artistic endeavour, so far as Dostoeffsky is concerned, does not forward smoothly, that it is not a coolly calculated one. Dostoeffsky writes in a fever, just as he lives and thinks in a fever. He has the nervous and hasty calligraphy of the ardent type of man, and when he sets pen to paper the words flow forth like chains of tiny beads; yet in his wrist, the while, his pulse is beating at redoubled speed. The author's nerves twitch convulsively; for him creation is an ecstasy, a martyrdom, a delight and a disruption, an agonizing voluptuousness and a voluptuous agony, an everlasting spasm, a constantly recurring eruption of his volcanic nature. *Poor Folk*, which he composed at the age of twenty-four, was written "with tears"; ever after, each of his books is born out of a crisis, an illness. "I am working feverishly, in an atmosphere of torment and worry. If I strain at my work I become physically a wreck." In actual fact his epileptic fits, with their febrile and devastating rhythm,

with their dark and stupefying repressions, make themselves felt in the remotest ramifications of his works. He creates with every force in his being, in a state of hysterical frenzy. Even the less important of his writings, his journalistic essays, have passed through the furnace of his passion. He never draws free-hand, never works with the manipulative dexterity and insouciance of a good technician; he enters in the action of the drama with his nerves tingling, and thus he suffers acutely with his characters and on their behalf. All his works are explosive, because of the electrical tension they embody, like that heralding a thunderstorm. He cannot depict without being part of the depiction, and of Dostoeffsky it might be said as Stendhal says of himself (in the person of Henri Brulard): "Quand il était sans émotion, il était sans esprit." When Dostoeffsky failed to be passionate, he failed also as a creative artist.

But, in the realm of art, passion may be as destructive as it is creative. It creates no more than the chaos of forces, whose eternal forms have to be moulded by the lucid mind. All art requires unrest as a spur to creation; and yet no less important are repose, reflection, consideration, if the work is to be perfected. Dostoeffsky's mind, which cut clean like a diamond through glass into the realm of reality, recognized the need for an atmosphere of crystalline coldness around a work of art. He worshipped a really fine architectonic, he would gladly have constructed a beautifully ordered scheme of the universe. But as soon as he began to build, his feelings ran away with him. The cleavage between what the brain wanted and what the heart made him do is only too apparent in his work, and might be described as the antagonism between architectonic and passion. In vain does Dostoeffsky, the artist, try to be objective, to re-

main on the outside of things, to tell a plain story, to describe people, to be an unbiased recorder of events, an analyst of the emotions. Irresistibly he is forced to suffer and to sympathize with the events in the world of his creation. There is always a suggestion of the primal chaos in Dostoeffsky's completed works; he never achieves harmony. Ivan Karamazoff, the betrayer of his creator's most intimate thoughts, exclaims: "I hate harmony." No peace is ever to be signed between form and desire, no compromise, only—and this is the price he has to pay for the duality of his nature, a duality which permeates everything he does, suffusing it from the cool husk into its most glowing core—an unremitting struggle between outward and inward reality. The cleavage in his own temperament is reflected in the cleavage between the architecture of his work and the passionate content.

In his novels, Dostoeffsky never achieves the "epic vein," as it is called; that power of calmly recounting tremendous events, that great secret handed down from master to master throughout the ages, and possessed by all great writers from Homer to Gottfried Keller and Tolstoy. His world is born of passion; and only under the urge of passion can it be properly appreciated. We are never allowed to hear those gentle strains which lull to blessed tranquillity; we cannot feel sure that the storm and stress are over, cannot be certain that we have sailed safely into port, and are now in a position to contemplate from a distance, secure and unmolested, the turmoil of winds and waves. We are surrounded by, cabined within, the tragedy, and may not escape. The crises his characters traverse rage like a sickness in our own blood, and the problems he raises consume us like a fire. He plunges us into the seething at-

mosphere of his novels, takes us to the vertiginous heights overlooking the abysses of the soul, and leaves us breathless and dizzy. When our pulses beat with the same tumultuousness as his own, and our passions have assumed the impetus of his, then, and not till then, do his works belong to us and do we become an integral part of them. Dostoeffsky will tolerate none but tense beings as participators in his kingdom. The easy-going flâneur among books, the stroller who is content to amble along the beaten track where all the problems have been solved, must renounce the attempt to read Dostoeffsky; for only when our hearts are aflame with passion can we gain admittance to his realm.

Dostoeffsky's relationship to his reader is a discord; is full of dangerous, gruesome, voluptuous instincts. It is a passionate relationship, such as exists between man and wife; not, as with other authors, a companionship, full of friendliness and trust. Dickens and Gottfried Keller, his contemporaries, lure their readers persuasively into their world; they bespeak them kindly, gently initiating them into the story, and tickling their curiosity and their imaginative faculties. But Dostoeffsky is not content with having our interest; he wants the whole of us, body and soul. He charges his atmosphere with electricity, and finds subtle means to stimulate us. A hypnosis settles down on us, so that we surrender our will to his. He confuses our senses with unending speeches, enticing us into the innermost sanctuary by hints and mysterious allusions. Nor does he readily tolerate a surrender; he extends the martyrdom of preparation by slowly transfusing knowledge into our veins. Almost imperceptibly at first, restlessness sets in; but still he puts off the moment of initiation, introducing

fresh figures and pictures for our consideration. Like a man well versed in the art of love, he postpones the moment of our compliance with a devilish strength of will, thereby enhancing a millionfold the state of tension. Inevitably we derive the impression that an overwhelming tragedy is imminent; a flash of awesome foreboding rips the heavens of our souls. How long we are kept in suspense in *Crime and Punishment* before we are given to understand that all the apparently senseless descriptions of spiritual states are in reality a preparation for the double murder perpetrated by Raskolnikoff! And yet from the outset we have a premonition how events will unroll.

Dostoeffsky takes delight in the finesse of postponement; one obscure intimation here, another there, act as pinpricks in the tender skin of sensibility. Before the great scenes are allowed to take place, he gives us page after page full of vague yet significant, tedious yet stimulating expectation, until a sensitive reader is in a condition of spiritual fever and physical torment. Even pleasurable excitement is accentuated, by this fanatic of contrasts, till it develops into pain; and not until, in the overheated furnace of the breast, emotions are at boiling-point and the chest walls threaten to burst, does he bring his hammer down on our hearts; and we reach that moment of exaltation when, with a terrible release like the discharge of a thunder-cloud, our strained nerves are unstretched. Not until the tension has reached breaking-point does Dostoeffsky lift the veil, and bathe the exacerbated emotions in a gentle, tear-dimmed sensation.

Dostoeffsky's grip upon his reader is full of enmity, of sensuousness, and of passionate subtlety. He does not overcome us in open combat, but, like an assassin who spends

hours tracking down his victim, he suddenly pierces us to the heart. It is because he cannot stand aloof and contemplate the narrative unmoved, because he is himself caught up in the rush of his characters' emotions, that we deny him the title of epic writer. His technique is eruptive; he does not patiently construct the roadway leading into his work, removing the earth, shovel by shovel; but he mines from within, using the most concentrated energy, that he may blow the world to fragments, and simultaneously discharge his own stresses. His preparations are made underground, with conspiratorial art; and the result invariably takes the reader by surprise. One may have a presentiment that a catastrophe is in the air, but one is never sure; it is impossible to foresee in which of his characters the mine is being laid, or at what hour and in what circumstances the fuse is to be fired. From each of the characters a shaft runs down into the focal point of the occurrence; each individual is loaded with the inflammable material. The identity of him who is to ignite the fuse is kept from us with unexampled skill. For instance, among all those whose minds are poisoned with the thought of doing away with Fedor Karamazoff, no sign is vouchsafed as to who is the chosen instrument for the murder. Dostoeffsky, though he allows us to surmise as much as we like, never betrays his own secrets. One is aware only of fate, burrowing like a mole beneath the surface of life; one feels that a mine is laid just beneath one's heart; one faints with suspense. Then, in a tiny second of time, a streak of lightning flashes across the sultry sky; the tension is snapped.

And to lead up to this second, to this extraordinarily condensed situation, Dostoeffsky needs an unprecedentedly lengthy and abundant preliminary presentation. Such con-

centrated states, such intensity, can only be achieved through a monumental form of art, an art that has something of primitive grandeur about it, an art which has the quality of a saga. Breadth in this case is not garrulousness, but architecture. Just as the pyramids required gigantic foundations, so Dostoeffsky, in order to achieve the pinnacles of his building, needs the massive dimensions of his novels. Indeed, his novels roll on their way like the Volga or the Dnieper, those mighty streams of his homeland. They have something of the river about them, these slowly moving stories, gathering into their main current the countless tributary rivulets of life. They sweep away in their hundreds of pages many a political rock and polemical stone as their waters overflow the banks of an art which would if it could keep them in their channels. Often, when inspiration is lacking, they broaden out into shallow pools wherein the water seems about to drain away into the sand. Their flow becomes sluggish, they trickle laboriously in curves and through swamps; they stagnate for hours in morasses of talk; until at last the current narrows, and the flow of the story, having renewed its impetus, swings passionately forward again.

Then, as we approach the sea, infinitude, we are hurled into a veritable race of waters; the tale speeds along like the whirlwind, the pages fly, the tempo accelerates, carrying us towards the edge whence the roar of the waterfall assails our ears. The whole volume of waters is transformed of a sudden into a seething mass of foam, hurtling onward with inconceivable haste. As the story, like a river storming down a cataract, hurries to its final catharsis, so the reader willy-nilly turns the pages quicker and quicker, until he is flung into the abyss of the accomplished fact and

his emotional tension is shattered among the boulders.

This torrential rush of feeling comes at the close of every one of Dostoeffsky's novels, conceived as they are on the grand scale. During the climax, the whole of life is condensed into a unit; the commotion we experience is both torturing and vertiginous; it is as if we were standing on the top of a high tower and looking down into our own depths; a divine madness seems to possess us, and we have the bliss of savouring beforehand the sensation of precipitating ourselves to our death. Maybe all novels are written with this white-hot moment in view. Dostoeffsky has given us twenty or thirty tremendous situations in the course of his works, and each attains to such a degree of vehemence and is so pregnant with passion that, not only are we dumbfounded at the first reading, but even at the fourth or fifth it is as if a flaming arrow were piercing us to the heart. At such moments all the personalities of the book seem to be congregated into one room, and each of them is animated by the full vigour of his own arbitrary will. All the roads and streams and forces are, by some inexorable magic, gathered together to find relief in a single action, in a single countenance, in a single word. Let us recall the moment in *The Possessed* when Shatoff strikes Stavrogin, and the "sodden thud" of the blow shatters the web of the mystery; or that scene in *The Idiot* when Nastasya Filipovna throws the hundred thousand roubles into the fire; or the confession scenes in *Crime and Punishment* and in *The Brothers Karamazoff*. At these moments (the highest moments in Dostoeffsky's art, when what happens is no longer taking place in the world of matter but appertains to the elemental forms of being), architecture and passion are wedded for life. Only at the instant of rapture, that all-too-

short instant in the artist's life, does Dostoeffsky become a unified man. At length the artist has triumphed over the mere human being. Not until we contemplate the work in retrospect do we realize how marvellously each step in the ascent has been calculated; with what intimate knowledge men and circumstances are made to supplement one another and set one another off; how the thousand and one equations are reduced to a common standard, the ultimate unit of feeling. The essence of Dostoeffsky's art is this power of leading up to such concentrated crises wherein the electrical tensions of feeling are condensed and towards which the lightning discharges of fate are infallibly attracted.

Need we further insist upon the origin of this unique art form? Need we repeat that it is merely the re-creation in the artistic field of the occurrences taking place within the psyche of the author himself? Never has the suffering of an artist been put to better use; never before has it culminated in a climax so convincing that the reader loses all sense of time and place. Long though these books are, they are miracles of emotional condensation. Let me illustrate the paradox. In the first three hundred odd pages of *The Idiot* we are confronted with a maelstrom of destinies; a chaos of souls flies by us; a multitude of people are brought to life before our very eyes. We have strolled along the streets with them, have sat in houses in their company. Then, suddenly, we become aware that the innumerable happenings we have been witnessing have all taken place in little more than twelve hours, between forenoon and midnight. The events wherein the Karamazoffs act out their fate occupy only a few days in time; the Raskolnikoff tragedy fulfils itself in a week. Masterpieces of condensa-

tion, rarely met with among epic writings, and very rarely achieved even in life itself! Alone among the tragedies of classical antiquity does the story of Œdipus attain a similar condensation, for there, between noon and evening, a whole lifetime and a previous generation are compressed; we experience the descent from the heights into the depths and the ascent to the heights again, the merciless see-saw of chance and likewise the purifying power of a spiritual storm. In the great moments of Dostoeffsky's creation, his novels take on the shape of drama, and he then excels as a writer of tragedy. The close of the Karamazoff tragedy is soul of the Greek tragedy's soul, flesh of Shakespeare's flesh. The titan stands before us in them all, naked, defenceless, puny, beneath the tragic skies of destiny.

At the moment of catastrophe, these novels of Dostoeffsky's lose their character as tales. They throw off the vestments of mere story-telling, and become dialogue, white-hot dialogue. The big scenes are pure dialogue, they could be transferred just as they are on to the stage, so dramatically are they conceived and carried out. Indeed, the novelist has turned playwright.

Nor were actor managers slow to grasp this truth; so that very soon there were acting versions of Raskolnikoff, the Idiot, and the Karamazoffs. But hardly did they see the footlights, when it became manifest how impossible it was to represent such characters from without, to drag them from their proper sphere, out of the world of the spirit. Like stricken trees, stripped of bark and leaves, lifeless, do these figures appear on the boards compared with their electrifying vitality in the world to which they properly belong. They depend so greatly for their powers of presentation upon suggestion and premonition and chiaroscuro.

Dostoeffsky's psychology cannot be forced into the limelight; those who would try to simplify it, or "work it up anew," have contumely for their reward. There are strange contacts, undercurrents, and shades of meaning, in this subterranean world; and all of them elude our grasp. He does not construct his figures with visible material, but with thousands upon thousands of hints; nothing more delicate is known in the realm of literature than the gossamer warp and woof of his weaving. Try, for example, to read one of these novels in the abridged French version. Outwardly nothing seems to be lacking. Events roll briskly on their course, as in a film; the figures appear more agile than in the original, they are more firmly knit; even, perhaps, more passionate. And yet, somehow, they are impoverished, their souls lack that strangely iridescent sheen, the atmosphere has been deprived of its electric spark, the sultry tension whose discharge brings so agreeable a sense of relief is not there. Something has been destroyed which cannot be replaced; the magic circle has been broken. These abridgments and attempts at dramatization make manifest the meaning of Dostoeffsky's breadth of treatment, and the object of his apparent garrulousness. For the tiny, ephemeral, haphazard hints, which at the time appear trivial and superfluous details, have their reverberation many hundred pages farther on in the book. Beneath the surface of the tale there is a mysterious switchboard; a network of live wires carrying the messages far and wide, and creating strange repercussions. He has invented a special shorthand of the soul, minute physical and psychical signs, whose meaning becomes clear to us only at a third or a fourth reading. Where else do we find so perfected a nervous system in the art of story-telling, such a medley of

occurrences beneath the skeletal structure of events and under the superficial layers of the dialogue? And yet the word "system" is, perhaps, a misnomer. The psychological processes we are confronted with can only be compared with the seemingly spontaneous and yet inexplicable ordering of man himself. Whereas other great writers, and in especial Goethe, appear to take nature as their model rather than man, allowing events to develop organically like a plant and picturesquely like a landscape, Dostoeffsky's novels are like an encounter with an exceptionally profound and passionate human being. His works depict the archetypal man ranging the infinite, a being of nerves and incandescent flesh and brain, a being whose personality is cloven in twain, a creature who is wise and excitable and passionate. His works are as unsearchable and as unfathomable as is the soul within its bodily prison-house; and they are incomparable monuments of literary art.

They are incomparable! Our admiration of his artistry, of his spiritual mastery, transcends all bounds; and the more we immerse ourselves in his writings, the more overwhelmed are we by their almost incredible power and greatness. Yet this is not to say that every one of Dostoeffsky's novels is a perfect work of art. Indeed, they are far less perfect as works of art than are many others of much less intrinsic value, dealing with a smaller circle of interests and satisfied with more modest aims. The measureless may be able to reach the infinite, but the infinite cannot be copied. Much of the architectonic may become blurred by passion, and the building which has been conceived on the heroic scale may be spoiled by impatience in the execution. But Dostoeffsky's impatience leads back from the tragedy depicted by his art into the tragedy of his own life. As with

Balzac, so with Dostoeffsky, his impatience was due to poverty, not to levity; life made so many claims upon him that he had to write quickly and not trouble his head about perfection. We must never forget how these works came into being. The whole novel was already sold ere the author had completed the first chapter, so that he was always in a hurry to finish within contract time. He worked "like an old post-horse"; ever on the go, travelling from place to place; he lacked both time and opportunities for rest, and for putting the final polish on his work. Was not he the first to reproach himself? "If you could only see the conditions in which I have to work! You demand masterpieces from me; yet the bitterest need is always hurrying me along."

He envies Turgeneff and Tolstoy who can sit at home at ease, rounding off their periods amid the comforts of their own estates. Yet he is not by nature envious. As a man, he does not shun poverty; but the artist, abased to the rank of proletarian, rages against "landowner literature." He longs, with the longing of all true artists, for leisure and tranquillity wherein to perfect his work. No flaw in his writings is ignored by him; he knows that after he has had an epileptic fit the interest of the story slackens, that the taut integument of the work of art loses its elasticity, and that much indifferent matter is allowed to creep in. His friends and his wife often have to draw his attention to gross lapses, for in the days immediately following his attacks he forgets much that he has planned before the seizure.

This proletarian, this wage earner, this slave of the signed contract, this man who in the days of his direst need wrote three huge novels one after the other without a

pause, is actually one of the most self-critical of artists. He loves to the pitch of fanaticism the exquisite and delicate art of finishing and perfecting. Even under the lash of penury he files and polishes certain passages; twice he starts afresh on *The Idiot*, although his wife is hungry and the midwife is clamouring for her dues. His desire for completion is inexhaustible; but his poverty, too, is inexhaustible. The two powers wrestle for predominance, the external necessity with the inner urge. The artist in him suffers as greatly from a cleavage as does the man. The artist in him craves for perfection. In every aspect of his life, whether as man or as artist, he is crucified upon the cross of his duplex destiny.

Thus even his art is no solace to him; it is a torture, full of haste and flight, and can never become a home for this homeless wanderer. The passion, too, which drives him to creation, drives him over the boundary line of completion. Aye, he is hunted beyond completion into the realm of the everlastingly endless. Like truncated, unfinished towers (both in *The Brothers Karamazoff* and in *Crime and Punishment* we are given to understand there will be a second part, but no such part was ever written), the massive edifices of his novels points upward to the altitudes of religion, and are lost among the clouds of eternal questionings. They are not novels in the true sense; rather are they heroic masses, no longer related to literature; they seem to be prophetic preludes to the saga of a new humanity. For, deep as is Dostoeffsky's love for art, art is not an end in itself so far as he is concerned. As it was for his Russian forbears so it is for him, a confession of faith leading from the human to the divine. Thus has it ever been with his great compatriots. After writing *Dead Souls*, Gogol thrust

literature aside and became a mystic, a herald of the new Russia; at sixty, Tolstoy renounced art and became the evangelist of the good and the just; Gorki turned his back on fame in order to preach the revolution. Dostoeffsky, too, though he remained a diligent writer till the end, was concerned in later years, not to produce works of art, but to voice the gospel of the "Third Kingdom"; a myth relating to the new world which was to arise on Russian soil, an apocalyptic prophecy, obscure and enigmatic. Art for him was no more than a beginning: his goal was in the endless. Art was for him no more than a step on the way to the temple, not the holy place itself. His works in their aggregate enshrine something so great that words are not competent to express it; and, for the very reason that this great something is only hinted at and is not presented in a perishable form, these works are means for the fulfilment of man and of humanity.

THE TRANSGRESSOR OF BOUNDARIES

In your lack of power to finish anything,
lies the secret of your greatness.

GOETHE

TRADITION is a stone wall of the past surrounding the present: he who would penetrate into the future must step over it. For Mother Nature brooks no halt in the acquiring of knowledge; she seems to command that order shall be, and loves those only who destroy the old order for the sake of establishing the new. Within the individual man, and by the overplus of his own energies, she is perpetually creating anew those conquistadors who, from the familiar shores of their own soul, fare forth upon the waters of uncharted seas to discover fresh zones of the heart and hitherto unexplored spiritual spheres. Were it not for these bold adventurers, man would be caught in a snare of his own making, and his development would be confined within a narrow circle. Lacking these messengers who, in their haste to herald other dawns, outdistance their own selves, each generation would continue along the beaten way. To these great dreamers is due the knowledge humanity has gained of its own deeper significance. It is not the calm investigators, the geographers of the homeland region, who have brought the far horizons within the range of mortal vision, but the desperados who sailed away to discover new continents. Not the psychologists, men of science though they be, have laid bare the deep recesses of the modern soul, but

the men of creative genius who overstepped all frontiers.

Of those who in modern times overstepped the frontiers in the world of literature, Dostoeffsky was the greatest; no one has discovered so many new spiritual continents as this man to whom, as he himself declared, "the immeasurable and the unending are as necessary as our finite earth." It is wellnigh impossible to enumerate his many deeds: his wanderings over the cold desolations of thought; his descents into the hidden springs of the unconscious; his ascents, his somnambulistic ascents to the dizzy heights of self-knowledge. Where there was no beaten trail, he made one for himself; and by preference he dwelt in labyrinths and wildernesses. None has fathomed the mechanism and the magic of spiritual things with more precision: the soul is better known, it is more alive and more conscious and simultaneously more mysterious and divine, because of him. To him we owe it that we are more aware of our inborn mysteries, and are able, from the mountain-top of his works, to gaze upon the promised land of a future day.

The first barrier to fall down before Dostoeffsky's onslaught was that which blocked the way into the land of his birth. He opened for us the doors into Russia. He discovered his own nation to the world at large, widening our European consciousness, so that for the first time the Russian spirit was shown to be a fragment, a precious fragment, of the world spirit. Before his day, Russia had appeared as a buffer so far as Europe was concerned, a corridor, as it were, leading into Asia, an area on a map, a relic of a day long past, left behind to remind us of our own barbaric childhood. He, however, demonstrated what this desert held of power for the future; since Dostoeffsky's time we feel that Russia is the emblem of a new religion, that Rus-

sia must pronounce the initial word in the great new canticle of mankind. He made the world richer by imparting a fresh knowledge and a fresh promise for the future. Pushkin showed us the Russian aristocracy; Tolstoy portrayed for us the simple, patriarchal, peasant type, a being who belonged essentially to the old, divided, worn-out world. Dostoeffsky fires us with his message of new possibilities; he is the first to fan to flame the genius of this new nation, and he makes us almost sorrowful that the ardent inspiration of a youthful world and of a soul in the making should be poured forth from Russia into the weary, stagnant world of Europe. During the Great War we could not but feel that we owed all our knowledge of Russia to Dostoeffsky; and it is he whom we Germans have to thank because, in spite of the fact that Russia was an enemy country, we could feel that it was the brotherland of the soul.

Had not Pushkin perished at the age of thirty-seven, he, too, might have achieved this same kind of cultural enlargement of our knowledge concerning the idea that Russia represents. But Dostoeffsky alone is responsible for the tremendous widening of our spiritual self-knowledge; his achievement here is unexampled in the history of literature. He is the psychologist of psychologists. The depths of the human heart exercise an uncanny attraction upon him; the unconscious, the subconscious, the unsearchable—these are his true worlds. Since Shakespeare lived and wrote we have not learned so much from any one as from Dostoeffsky about the secret sources of the emotions and the magic laws which govern their interactions; and just as Odysseus was the only mortal who ever returned from Hades and told us of his experiences there, so Dostoeffsky relates his voyages in the underworld of the soul. For he,

too, like Odysseus, was ciceroned by a god, or, an you will, a demon. His malady, by turns lifting him to the highest pinnacles of feeling which no common mortal may attain and hurling him down into the nethermost depths of anxiety and horror, had acclimatized him to the atmosphere of these regions beyond the margins of ordinary conscious experience—an atmosphere sometimes icily cold and sometimes irrespirably hot. Even as nocturnal animals see in the dark, so he sees into the obscure regions of the soul with clearer vision than others can see in the bright light of day. The fiery element which consumes our common clay seems to him no more than a beneficial warmth; and, since a morbid spiritual realm is his abiding place, he is intimately acquainted with the profoundest mysteries of life. He has gazed into the eyes of madness; like a sleepwalker unfalteringly aprowl in the moonlight, he treads the highest peaks of the emotions whence those who are awake and aware would shrink in terror. Dostoeffsky has delved deeper into the layers of the unconscious than has any physician or lawyer, or criminologist, or psychiatrist. All that science was later to reveal in this field of investigation, all that was subsequently dissected out from this underground region of the human spirit, all the strange phenomena of telepathy, hysteria, hallucination, and perversion, had become known to him, decades in advance, through personal experience, through suffering, and through imaginative insight. He probed the phenomena of the mind to where they verge on madness (intellectual excess), and crime (emotional excess), thereby opening up new spiritual continents. Thus, while writing the last pages of an old science, he was enriching art with the elements of a new psychology.

A new psychology! For the science of the mind likewise

has its methodology, no less than art, which adown the ages may seem to be a unity, yet unendingly must create new laws for its being. In this realm, too, knowledge suffers a change; it progresses through fresh solutions and new determining factors. Just as the experimental chemist is constantly discovering new elements, and has again and again been able to show that what were regarded as elements (as indivisible) are really compounds, so have psychologists been able to an ever-increasing degree to split up the apparent unity of feeling into an infinitude of impulses and counter-impulses. Despite the existence, in earlier days, of isolated men of genius who were forerunners of the modern outlook, it is indubitable that a line must be drawn between the old psychology and the new. From Homer to Shakespeare, we find in the works of the great writers the same restricted psychological outlook—a psychology that runs straight forward in a narrow groove. To our ancestors of long ago, man was still a formula, a quality equipped with bones and flesh. Odysseus is cunning; Achilles, brave; Ajax, wrathful; Nestor, wise. These men's resolves and actions, one and all, are conceived as simple, and manifestly dictated by an impulse of the will. Even Shakespeare, who stood at the branching of the ways between the old art and the new, composes his characters so that the conflicting melodies which make up their being are yet sustained by a dominant pedal. Nevertheless he was responsible for sending precursors into our modern age from the mental atmosphere of the Middle Ages. In Hamlet he gives us the first enigmatical character, the progenitor of the differentiated men of our own day. Here, for the first time within the meaning of the new psychology, a man's will is frustrated through his inhibitions; the mirror of self-observation is

placed in the mind itself; the being with a knowledge of his own reactions is portrayed; his duplexity of purpose, which affects him both internally and externally, is exposed; we are shown a man thinking in the article of doing, and realizing himself during the process of thought. Here for the first time we are given the study of a man living the kind of mental and emotional life we ourselves live; he feels as we feel, though he has not yet emerged from a twilit consciousness, and is still enmeshed in the toils of a superstitious age. The affective influences that determine his most important actions are objectified for him as magic potions and as ghosts, instead of being recognized as mere illusions and forebodings.

But the tremendous psychological discovery has, nevertheless, been made; the duplexity of the emotional life has been laid bare. The new spiritual continent is henceforward open to exploration. The man of romantic temperament, as portrayed by Byron or Goethe or Shelley, such a man as "Childe Harold" or Werther, for instance, aware of the clash between his own passionate disposition and the sober world of everyday life, promotes by his very restlessness of spirit the chemical disintegration of the emotions, and thus favours their psychological analysis. Exact science, all the while, is providing us with valuable information. Then comes Stendhal. He can tell us more about the "crystallization" of the feelings than could any of his predecessors; he knows much about the bivalence of the emotions, and their capacity for metamorphosis. He divines the obscure conflict which takes place in the heart before any decision can be made. But the innate lethargy of his genius, the insouciance of his character, makes it impossible for him to reveal all the dynamics of the unconscious.

Dostoeffsky was the first to pluck out the heart of the mystery. He achieved the complete analysis of the emotions, he exploded the concept of the unity of the feelings, with the result that the characters in his books are endowed with psyches new in the world of literature. The analyses of the mind undertaken by his predecessors, bold though they may have appeared at the time, seem to us superficial in comparison with Dostoeffsky's work in the same field. It is as if we were reading a textbook on electrical technique written thirty years ago, wherein tentative surmises as to the possible developments of the science were made, but in which there was no real approach to our present-day knowledge.

In Dostoeffsky's mental universe nothing appears as a simple, indivisible element; everything is a conglomerate, is a transitional form, an intermediate form, a form which is in a state of flux. We are shown the mind in a tumult of indecision and confusion before the accomplishment of any and every deed; a frenzied interplay between desires and actualities shakes the feelings together pellmell. Constantly we think that we have struck the bedrock motive underlying a decision, or have fathomed the reasons for some particular craving; but invariably we find that, after all, there are yet deeper motives and reasons. Hate, love, carnal desire, infirmity of purpose, vanity, pride, lust for power, humility, veneration, all the impulses of the human heart, are entangled one with the other in everlasting transformation. Dostoeffsky discloses the mind as a realm of strange confusions, and sublime chaos. He portrays men who become drunkards out of a longing for purity, and who become criminals because they crave to experience remorse; he shows us men whose reverence for purity and

innocence leads them to ravish young girls, and men whose religious cravings find satisfaction in blasphemy. When his characters lust, they do so quite as much in the hope of a repulse as in the hope of a gratification of their desires. Their defiance, if we look beneath the surface, is nothing but a cloak to hide their shyness; their love is a starveling hate; their hate is a camouflaged love.

One contrast fecundates another. He shows us wastrels who are what they are because they hanker afer suffering, and self-mortifiers who yearn for carnal pleasures; their wills spin dizzily as in a raging whirlpool. In the phase of longing, they experience the pleasure of attainment; in the very lists of love, they are overwhelmed with the disgust of satiety; while action is in progress, they are already repenting the unfinished deed; and when the hour of repentance has struck, they are in retrospect luxuriating in the delight of action. All their feelings have an obverse and a reverse—unless there be an even greater complication of aspects. The deeds they do are not the ones they want to do; and the sayings of their souls are never uttered by their lips. Every feeling, therefore, is many-sided, complex, ambiguous.

The upshot is that none of Dostoeffsky's characters can be summed up in a simple linguistic concept, not one of them can be adequately described in terms of unified feeling. For instance, we may speak of Fedor Karamazoff as a libertine, and the expression seems to describe him exhaustively; but Svidrigailoff is likewise a libertine, and so is the unnamed student in *A Raw Youth*—yet there is a world of difference between them, an immense diversity in the feelings each of them experiences. Svidrigailoff's sensuousness takes the form of a cold and soulless depravity; he is the

calculating tactician of debauchery. Karamazoff's licentiousness is really a love of life, is debauchery pushed to the point of personal uncleanliness, is a profound impulse urging him to mix himself with the basest things life has to offer because such things are emanations of life, and Fedor, from sheer excess of vitality, wishes to enjoy the very dregs of life. The former is a libertine because of a poor emotional make-up, the latter because of a superfluity of feeling; that which in the sickly Svidrigailoff is caused by acute irritation of the mind, is in Fedor a chronic inflammation. Again, Svidrigailoff is no more than a half-hearted voluptuary, indulging in petty vices, a dirty little beast, an "insect" having sensual lusts. Likewise that nameless student in *A Raw Youth* represents the degeneration of spiritual depravity into sexual perversion. All three are "libertines"; but their feelings, let me repeat, belong to separate worlds. Now, just as in this instance carnal desire is differentiated and dissected out into its component parts and its most far-reaching ramifications, so is every feeling and every impulse analysed in Dostoeffsky's books, until at length we reach the primal source of energy which is the ultimate contrast, the unending conflict, between the ego and the world, between affirmation and surrender, between pride and humility, between extravagance and thrift, between isolation and co-operation, between centripetal and centrifugal force, between glorification and self-abasement, between man and God. Any conjuncture of opposites is possible, according as circumstances demand; but in the last resort they are fundamental emotions belonging to the realm which lies somewhere betwixt spirit and flesh. Dostoeffsky was the first to reveal to us this teeming multiplicity of emotions, this complexity of our spiritual universe.

But the most amazing of all Dostoeffsky's achievements is his analysis of the love sentiment. For hundreds of years, ever since the days of classical antiquity, literature has taken the relation of man to woman and woman to man as its central theme and as the fountain-head of existence. Yet Dostoeffsky has pushed his researches in this domain into deeper channels and on to higher peaks; indeed he has won to an ultimate knowledge of the topic, and that is perhaps the greatest of his deeds. Love is for other imaginative writers the aim of life, the goal towards which the story as a work of art is directed; for Dostoeffsky, however, love is no more than a stage on life's highway. In the work of the generality of novelists, the glorious second of reconciliation, the wonderful moment when all contentions are appeased, when the spirit and the senses experience a mutual interpenetration, and when the two sexes are merged in one perfect and divine emotion, beacons at the very outset. As contrasted with Dostoeffsky's treatment of the subject, we cannot but see that other authors deal with this vital conflict in a ridiculously primitive manner. Love, as they show it, touches men lightly with a magic wand; it is a mystery, the incomprehensible and ultimate mystery of life. Lovers love, are happy if they attain their end, unhappy if they are thwarted. Mutual love is presented as the most seraphic of states.

Dostoeffsky's heaven is at a far greater altitude. An embrace, for him, does not mean conjunction; harmony is not unison. Love is not a state of happiness, a conciliation; but, rather, a struggle in a loftier sphere, a sharper pang in the perennial wound, an intenser degree of the customary life agony. When Dostoeffsky's men and women love, they do not find rest. Far from it. Never are they more

profoundly shaken by their intrinsic contradictions than at the instant when they realize that their love is reciprocated; they do not allow love to master them, but endeavour to overcome it. Genuine offspring of the cleavage within himself, they do not pause to savour this final instant of delight. They despise the sweet equation of the moment (one which is so delectable to most mortals) when the lover and his beloved know that they are equals in their reciprocal passion. This would mean an acceptance of harmony: it would be a recognition that the end had been gained, that a boundary had been reached; whereas they live only for the limitless. Dostoeffsky's men and women do not want to love as they are loved: all they want is to love, so that they may be the victims, may be the most generous givers; they vie with one another in intensifying their feelings, until love which began as a gentle game becomes a sob in the throat, a groan, a combat, a pain. With a revulsion of feeling they are happy when their love is scorned, for then they alone are the donors, giving endlessly and asking nothing in return. That is why hatred so closely resembles love, and love hatred, among these creatures of Dostoeffsky's fashioning. Even in the brief spells when the lovers concentrate their affection one on the other, we find the emotional unity rent asunder; for these people never seem capable of loving with the combined strength of their senses and their intellects. They love with the former or with the latter, separately; flesh and spirit never achieve harmony. We have but to contemplate any of his women characters. They are all of them Kundrys, living simultaneously in two emotional spheres, serving the holy grail with the soul while the body is consumed with passion in the magic garden of Klingsor.

Most authors fight shy of the perplexing question of divided affection, but in Dostoeffsky's books such a splitting of the love passion is an everyday occurrence. Nastasya Filipovna loves the gentle Myshkin with the spiritual side of her nature, while at the same time she has a physical longing for Rogozhin, the prince's enemy. She shakes off the prince at the church door in order to fling herself into the bed of his rival, and escapes from the drunkard's carousal into the arms of her saviour. Her soul seems to stand on high ground contemplating what her body does below; her body appears to be in a trance while her soul is rapt in ecstasy. Grushenka, too, is thus torn in twain. She simultaneously loves and hates her first seducer; she has a bodily craving for Dmitri and a spiritual passion for Alyosha, who has already become quite unfleshly. The mother of the "Raw Youth" loves her first husband from a sense of gratitude, and Versiloff slavishly from an abject sense of humility.

These ideas, which other psychologists lightly group together under the generic name of "love," are treated by Dostoeffsky in a hundred different ways and considered under a thousand different aspects. We have seen the same phenomenon take place in the domain of medicine, where of old the doctors were content to group a whole series of maladies under one name, for which nowadays there exist a hundred names and a hundred different methods of treatment. Under Dostoeffsky's delicate manipulation, love may become hatred (Alexandra), sympathy (Dunia), defiance (Rogozhin), sensuousness (Fedor Karamazoff); yet always behind these manifestations of love, however distorted, there remains a primal emotion. For him, love is never like an element, indivisible, unanalysable, an arche-

typal phenomenon, a miracle: he invariably elucidates and decomposes the passionate emotion. And the changes he rings upon the theme of love are unending. Consider Katerina Ivanovna. She meets Dmitri at a ball, he asks to be introduced, he affronts her, and she shows her dislike. He takes his revenge by inflicting a gross humiliation upon her, whereupon she loves him—or, rather, she does not love him so much as the debasement he has been instrumental in bringing upon her. Under the impression that she loves him, she gives herself to him; but it is her own self-oblation she is in love with, and the more she appears to love him the more in reality does she hate him. This hatred swamps his life and ruins it; but at the moment when he is ruined, when her own sacrifice is proved to be a lie and has therefore avenged his primary insult—she loves him once more. Thus complicated is Dostoeffsky's treatment of love! He begins where an ordinary novelist ends. Whereas in most works of fiction the two lovers, after passing through all conceivable vicissitudes, are joined together on the last page when their troubles are behind them, this is precisely the moment when Dostoeffsky's tragedies begin. He has no interest in love as the gentle reconciler of the sexes, and does not contemplate such love as embodying the meaning and the triumph of life. He goes back to the great traditions of classical antiquity, when a hero had not merely to win a woman, but to overcome a whole world and all the gods besides. His men raise their eyes, not to women, but to the very countenance of God. He depicts a tragedy of wider significance than the battle of the sexes.

Once having made ourselves familiar with these profound analyses of the emotions, we cannot go back to the

manner of an earlier day. If art is to be true to itself it must no longer try to set up the idols Dostoeffsky has overthrown, it must no longer continue to describe the narrow worlds of society and the conventional emotions, and ignore the intermediate realm of the mind which he has done so much to elucidate. He was the first to give us an inkling of the kind of beings we of the new time are becoming, as contrasted with our forefathers; we are creatures with far more diversified feelings, because we are burdened with so much more experience than they. It is amazing how greatly, during the fifty odd years since Dostoeffsky's books appeared, we have come to resemble the people he portrayed and how many of his prophecies have been fulfilled. The new continent he was the first to set foot on is perhaps already ours, and the frontiers he strode across may well enclose our permanent homeland.

Much of what we are today experiencing he foresaw. He opened up new depths in the human soul, revealing secrets that no mortal had suspected before his time. Yet though we have become through him more familiar with the workings of our own minds, this new knowledge has not puffed us up with pride, nor does it prevent our contemplating life as something daimonic; for in spite of our greater self-consciousness, we have not become freer—indeed, we seem more closely shackled than before. The modern does not look upon lightning with any less awe because he knows it to be an electrical phenomenon, a discharge of atmospheric tensions; nor does his profounder knowledge of the mechanism of the human mind make him less reverent in his contemplation of mankind. More than any other imaginative writer of our time Dostoeffsky, the dissector, the atomizer of the emotions, has gifted us

with a profounder and more generalized feeling of world brotherhood. And Dostoeffsky, unrivalled in his knowledge of the human heart, was unrivalled likewise in his veneration for the Incomprehensible that shapes it: for the Divine, for God.

TORMENTED BY GOD

My whole life long, God has tormented me.

DOSTOEFFSKY

"Is there a God or not?" Ivan Karamazoff asks the Devil in that strange and terrible duologue. The tempter smiles. He is in no hurry to answer, or to ease the mind of a tortured man. "With savage intensity," Ivan presses his question, determined to extract a solution of this most important problem of existence. The Devil whets Ivan's impatience by saying: "Upon my word I do not know!" Out of a fiendish delight in torture, the Devil withholds his answer, leaving Ivan in the throes of a despairing doubt as to God's existence.

All Dostoeffsky's characters, and, indeed, he himself, harbour this devil within them; all ask the same question, and none receives an answer. All of them are equipped with the "superior heart" which is capable of tormenting itself with these perplexing questions. "Do you believe in God?" Stavrogin, a man transformed into a fiend, demands of the hesitant Shatoff. The latter trembles, turns pale, for the question is like red-hot steel in the young man's heart. It is always the most sterling of Dostoeffsky's characters who wince at this ultimate avowal, just as he himself so often was tortured with anxiety on behalf of what he held to be most sacred. When Stavrogin presses for an answer, Shatoff stammers: "I believe in Russia." It is only on Russia's

account that he makes his profession of faith in God.

This hidden God, and the discovery of God as he exists both within us and without—here we have the basic problem in all Dostoeffsky's books. To him, as the most Russian of Russians, the greatest and most vital product of this vast community of people, the solution of the enigma of God and immortality, is "the most important thing in life." None of his characters can evade the issue; it shadows their every deed—a shadow now cast before and now lagging in the rear, a reproach and a contrition. There is but one who tries to escape, tries to deny that there is any riddle, and becomes the martyr of his own thoughts; that man is Kirilloff in *The Possessed*, who has to kill himself in order to kill God, thereby proving more forcibly than all the others the existence of God and the impossibility of ever eluding him.

All these people shun talking of God, they avoid mentioning his name; they would like to keep to the small talk so much in favour among English novelists; they discuss serfdom, and women, and the Sistine Madonna, and Europe; yet the weight of the problem that obsesses them drags them inevitably back to the problem of Russia and God, the two being for them identical. No more than in their emotional life can these men exercise control over their thoughts; there is a constant see-saw from the actual and practical into the abstract, from the finite to the infinite. But no matter whither their flights may have taken them, they invariably come back to the problem of God. This enigma is like a whirlpool which mercilessly draws all their ideas into its vortex; it is a thorn in their sides, and frets them into a fever.

A fever! For Dostoeffsky's God is the principle of un-

rest; he is the primal father of contrasts, simultaneously the affirmative and the negative, the Yea and the Nay. Dostoeffsky's God is not the benevolent and venerable ancient depicted by the old masters, nor is he the gentle spirit hovering above the clouds as portrayed in the writings of the mystics. He is, rather, the live spark between the electrical poles of the archetypal contrasts; he is not a being but a condition, a condition of tension, a process whereby the emotions are consumed; he is a fire, a flame, heating men to the point of ecstasy. He is a lash, scourging them out of their warm, calm bodies into infinity; he lures them to every excess whether of word or deed, and hurls them into the burning bush of vice. He resembles the men who are his creatures, the men who created him, for he is an insatiable God, whom no exertion can master, no thought can fully grasp, no sacrifice content. He is the everlastingly unattainable, the pain of pains; and it is Dostoeffsky himself who cries from Kirilloff's lips: "My whole life long, God has tormented me."

Here we have the key to Dostoeffsky's suffering: he needs God, and cannot find him. Sometimes he fancies he can hear the divine voice, and ecstasy seizes him; but his need for negation pulls him once more to earth. No man has expressed the need for God more poignantly. "God is necessary to me," he once said, "because he is the only being one can always love." Another time: "No quest causes a man so much heartsearching as the endless quest for something he can worship." For sixty years he bowed beneath this "pain of God," loving God all the while as he loved torment, loving God above all else because God is eternal pain, and love of pain is the fundamental thought of Dostoeffsky's existence. For sixty years he fought his way to-

wards God, and, "like dried grass parched for want of water," he languished with the desire to believe.

The man whose very nature is cloven in twain aspires to unity; the unrestful soul, pursued by the hound of heaven, longs for rest; he who has been swept away by the torrent of the passions pines for quiet in the tranquil bosom of the sea. He seeks God as the giver of peace, and finds him as a raging fire. He would gladly be insignificant, dull-witted, in order to have no difficulty in holding fast to God; how delighted he would be if he could only believe implicitly "like the tradesman's fat wife"; he would joyfully forfeit his keen awareness and his extensive knowledge if only he could become the most fervent of believers; like Verlaine, he prays: "Donnez-moi de la simplicité." To consume the brain in emotion, to flow away into the peace of God, that is his dream. He stretches his hands Godward, he raises ardent supplication, he cries, he throws the harpoons of his logic hoping to capture God, his love is a craving for God, amounting to an "unseemly passion," a paroxysm, an extravaganza.

But does his fanatical desire for faith make him a believer? Was Dostoeffsky, the most eloquent advocate of orthodoxy, was he himself a believer, a poeta christianissimus? Certainly he was so at times, when his spasm jerked him into infinity and he convulsively clutched at God. Then he found the harmony he could never find on earth; then he who had been crucified on the cross of his duplexity, ascended into the one and only heaven.

And yet even at such moments something remains awake in him and refuses to be consumed in the conflagration of the soul. At the very second when he seems to be completely dissolved, rapt in a supra-terrestrial intoxication, his un-

canny analytical spirit is on the prowl, and is plumbing the waters in which he hopes to become submerged. His double revolts against this discarding of personality. Even in his endeavour to solve the problem of God, he is vexed by the irremediable cleavage in his temperament, a cleavage with which we are all of us born, but which has rent none more profoundly than it did Doestoeffsky. At one and the same time he is the truest of believers and the most arrant atheist; these polar extremes are convincingly portrayed in the characters of his novels, though he himself remained unconvinced and undecided; we are shown, on the one hand, abject humility and the craving to become absorbed into the divine essence, and, on the other, the magnificent pride of being God oneself. He loves both the servant of God and the man who denies God, both Alyosha and Ivan Karamazoff. The great council of his works is in perpetual session, but he can come to no decision there either for the true believers or for the heretics. His faith oscillates between Yea and Nay, the two poles of the universe. In the very presence of God, Dostoeffsky remains banished from the land of unity.

Like Sisyphus, he was condemned to roll up the hill of belief a stone which as soon as it reached the top always rolled down again. He was constantly endeavouring to attain to God, and was invariably unsuccessful in the attempt. Yet was not Dostoeffsky the great missionary of faith? Do not his works reverberate with the hymn to God? Are not all his writings, whether political or belletristic, a continual, an imperious, an indubitable testimony to the need for the existence of God? Do they not command us to be orthodox believers, and to look upon atheism as the sin of sins? Yes; but are we not confusing will with truth, belief with the

postulate of belief? Dostoeffsky, the bard of perpetual conversion and of contrasts become manifest, preaches belief as a necessity, and preaches it all the more devoutly to others because he himself is not a believer. That is to say, he is not a believer in the sense of possessing a steady, secure, calm, and intimate faith, a faith which formulates as the highest duty of its acolytes the possession of an "enlightened enthusiasm."

During his term in Siberia he wrote to a woman friend: "As far as I am concerned, I look upon myself as a child of the age, a child of unbelief and doubt; it is probable, nay I know for certain, that I shall remain so to my dying day. I have been tortured with longing to believe—am so, indeed, even now; and the yearning grows stronger, the more cogent the intellectual difficulties that stand in the way."

He never expressed himself with greater clarity, never epitomized more succinctly this craving to believe which has its roots in unbelief. Here we are presented with one of those marvellous transvaluations which Dostoeffsky was capable of effecting: he himself has no faith, and precisely because he knows the agony of this unfaith, because, as he himself says, he knows that he will be tortured with unbelief until the end of his days, he preaches to others a belief in a God whose existence he does not credit. This man so tormented by God desires that men shall be godly, he who is himself poignantly afflicted with lack of faith wishes that others shall be happy believers. Nailed to the cross of his own unbelief, he preaches orthodoxy to his nation, thus doing violence to his own convictions because he knows that they rend and consume; he preaches a lie which brings happiness to those who, like the peasants, believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. He whose faith is not even

as a grain of mustard seed, who rebels against God, and, as he proudly declares, "has voiced as powerful an atheism as any in Europe," demands that his compatriots shall submit to the dominance of the Russian priesthood. In order that he may preserve his fellow-mortals from the persecution of God, a persecution he has suffered from so intensely, he makes himself the prophet of God's love. For he realizes that "a lapse from faith, or any disturbance to a man's beliefs, constitutes for a certain portion of humanity so great a torment that hanging were better than to endure the pain longer." He did not seek any such way of personal release, but, rather, took upon himself the rôle of a martyr of doubt. Mankind, however, mankind for whom his love knew no end, mankind must be spared; just as his Grand Inquisitor would be glad to spare mankind the doubtful boon of freedom of conscience, and rock men to sleep in the dead cradle of authority. Thus, instead of arrogantly proclaiming the truth as he sees it, he humbly preaches the falsehood of belief. He shifts the religious problem into the arena of the national problem, which he infuses with the fanatical zeal rightly pertaining to the former. And he, too, answers the question, "Do you believe in God?" when he makes Shatoff say: "I believe in Russia."

This is his salvation, herein he may take sanctuary. His words no longer represent a cleavage: they have become a dogma. God has vouchsafed no sign: very well, then Dostoeffsky will create a mediator between himself and his conscience, will create a Christ, the new herald of a new humanity, a Russian Christ. In his urgent need for faith, he plunges forward out of reality, out of the time to which he belongs; he hurls himself into a vague immensity—such as is alone conformable to this man who knows no moderation.

He hurls himself into the tremendous idea of Russia, and floods the notion with the unstinted measure of his belief in the future of his country. He is another John, making ready the way for a new Christ whom he has not yet seen; but he speaks in the name of this new Christ, in the name of Russia, on behalf of the whole world.

His messianic writings (mainly confined to his political essays and to certain passages in the *Brothers Karamazoff*) are obscure. The visage of the new Christ emerges indistinctly from the pages, the new thought of redemption and universal reconciliation is confused; a Byzantine countenance is revealed to us, hard of feature, severe of mien. As from an ancient and smoke-begrimed ikon, strangely piercing orbs gaze into our eyes; they are filled with ardour, an infinitude of ardour, but likewise with hate and with harshness. And Dostoeffsky himself is awesome when, to us western Europeans whom he regards as no better than heathen, he proclaims his Russian evangel. This political propagandist, this zealot, then assumes the aspect of a malignant, fanatical monk from the Middle Ages, brandishing the Byzantine cross like a scourge. He preaches his gospel as if he were in a frenzy, like a dervish rather than a gentle prophet; he gives vent to his boundless passion in fierce invective. He batters every objection with a club; his voice peals forth from the rostrum of the epoch, feverish, raucous with hatred, vainglorious and arrogant. Foam flecks his lips; and, his hands trembling with passion, he slings his exorcisms into our world.

A born iconoclast, he storms forward to destroy all that is hallowed for us in our European civilization. He betramples our holy of holies, our ideals, in order to prepare the way for his new Christ. His Muscovite intolerance

makes him rage to the verge of madness. Europe, what is it? A graveyard, filled, maybe, with expensive tombstones, but filled likewise with the stench of corruption, its contents not even fit to serve as dung for the new seed. This new seed can only blossom in Russian soil. The French? Vain fops! The Germans? A base nation of sausage makers! The English? Hawkers of a crude rationalism! The Jews? They stink of pride! Catholicism is the doctrine of the Devil, and is an insult to Christ. Protestantism is a rationalistic State religion, a mockery of the one and true faith (i. e. the Russian Church). The Pope? Satan wearing the tiara. Our cities? Babylon, the great whore of the Apocalypse. Science? A vain delusion. Democracy? The skilly of persons suffering from softening of the brain. Revolution? A puppet-show of fools born or fools made. Pacifism? An old wives' tale. All the ideas (western) Europe has given birth to are no more than a bunch of faded flowers, fit only for the dustbin. The Russian idea is alone true and great and right. This hyperbolist poniards every protest as he rushes on his way. With a "we understand you but you do not understand us," he stamps upon discussion. "We Russians are omnicomprehending; you are narrow-minded and limited," he declares. Russia alone, with all that in her is, he proclaims as right: tsar and knout, orthodox priest and peasant, troika and ikon; and these things acquire additional rightness the more they are anti-European, the more they are Asiatic, Mongolian, Tatar, the more they are conservative, retrogressive, unprogressive, unintellectual, Byzantine. "Let us be Asiatics, let us be Sarmatians," he exclaims. "Away from Petersburg, the European city; back to Moscow and Siberia! The new Russia is the Third Kingdom." This mediæval monk, drunken with divine ecstasy, will brook no

discussion. Down with reason! Russia is the dogma which must be accepted without questioning. "Russia cannot be understood by means of the rational faculties; it can only be understood through faith." He who refuses to bend the knee to this new dogma is a foe, is antichrist; a crusade must be preached against the enemy of mankind. Shrilly he sounds the call to arms. Austria must be trampled under foot, the crescent must be torn from Saint Sophia's in Constantinople. Germany must be humbled and England vanquished. A crazy imperialism hides its arrogance under the cowl of the monk, and the words ring forth: "Dieu le veut!" The whole world must come under Russia's hegemony, that the kingdom of God may be established.

Russia, therefore, is Christ, the new redeemer; (western) Europeans are the heathen. Nothing can save us reprobates from the fires of our damnation. What is our original sin? That we were not born Russians. Our western world has no place in this new kingdom; it has first to pass away and become absorbed in the Russian world-empire, in the new kingdom of God; then only can it hope for salvation. "Every human being must first of all become a Russian," are Dostoeffsky's actual words. Then only can the Third Kingdom be established. Russia is the sustainer of God: she must first conquer the world by the sword, then only can the "ultimate word" of mankind be spoken. And this last word is, for Dostoeffsky, "reconciliation." According to him the Russian genius is shown in the capacity to understand all, and to solve every contradiction. Because of this power of universal comprehension, the Russian is in the highest sense of the term malleable. His State, the State of the future, will be the Church, will assume the form of a fraternal community, will permeate instead of subjugating.

And the words which follow seem as if they were expressly conceived as a prologue to Russia's part in the Great War (which at the outset was so proximate to his ideas, but which in the end came nearer to those of Tolstoy): "We shall be the first to announce to the world that we do not wish to thrive at the cost of the repression of individuality or the coercion of foreign nationalities. On the contrary, it is only by means of the free and independent development of every nation and by brotherly unity that we can hope to achieve our aim." Surely Lenin and Trotzky are foreshadowed in this prophetic utterance—but the Great War as well, for he, ever an advocate of the intensification of contrasts, was an enthusiast for war.

General reconciliation, that is the goal; but Russia is the only way to this goal: "The earth shall be re-created from the east." The everlasting ray shall stream across the Urals, and the humble folk—not the well-informed minds, not European culture, but the humble folk with their energies so strangely linking them to the earth—shall arise to save the world. Active love shall take the place of power; and personal enmities shall be replaced by a feeling of all-embracing fraternity. The new, the Russian Christ will bring about a universal reconciliation, and will solve all contradictions. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid! Dostoeffsky's voice trembles as he speaks of the Third Kingdom whose advent he proclaims, the Russia which is to absorb the whole earth. Now he is breathless with the ecstasy of belief; and he fills us with wonder, he who knows reality more intimately than any man alive, as he gives voice to his messianic dream.

He dreams his dream of a new Christ into the word

"Russia," into the "Idea of Russia," the idea of that reconciliation of opposites which all his life long, in his art, nay even in God himself, he yearned in vain to bring about. But when he speaks of Russia, which Russia does he mean? The real Russia or the mystical Russia; the political Russia or the prophetic? As ever with Dostoeffsky—all are included simultaneously in his concept. You must not ask for logic from a man who is guided by passionate impulse, any more than you must ask a dogmatist to give convincing grounds for his dogma. Throughout Dostoeffsky's messianic writings and in his literary works, his ideas are poured forth helter-skelter, so that it is very difficult to get a coherent grasp of what he is driving at. Russia is sometimes made to personify Christ, sometimes God the Father; at other times it is the realm of Peter the Great; and then, again, it is the New Rome, the unification of the spirit with might, of the tiara with the imperial crown; now its capital city is announced as being Moscow, next Constantinople, and finally the New Jerusalem. Ideals expressing the utmost humility and the most divine universal brotherliness, alternate with slavophil yearnings for power and conquest; a political horoscope will be cast with amazing aptness, and a moment later we shall read fantastic promises, or prophesies of an apocalyptic nature. Sometimes he will restrict his idea of Russia within the political confines of a specific hour, at other times he gives the idea so much latitude that it is lost in the infinite. Just as in his art, so here when he is voicing his message, we have a mixture of water and fire, of realism and fantasy. His genius and his exaggeration are to a certain degree controlled in his novels, but in his political writings they are given free rein. With all the passionate ardour of his nature, he preaches Russia as the

saviour of the world, as the only bringer of seraphic joy. Never has the national idea been promulgated to Europe as a world ideal more proudly, with more inspired fervour, more seductively, more intoxicatingly, more ecstatically, than the Russian national idea is proclaimed in the books of Dostoeffsky.

At first sight, this fanatical extoller of his own race, this pitiless and ecstatic Russian monk, this arrogant pamphleteer, this insincere believer, appears to be an unorganic excrescence of the Russian colossus. But the fanaticism is essential to the unification of Dostoeffsky's personality. Whenever we are gravelled by a phenomenon concerning this writer, we must search for the explanation in its opposite. We must never forget that Dostoeffsky is himself both affirmation and negation, both the Yea and the Nay, both self-destruction and self-exaltation—contrast driven to the extreme. His excessive arrogance is merely the reflexion of his excessive humility; his exaggerated folk-consciousness no more than the polar opposite of his exacerbated feeling of personal nullity. He is cloven in twain, one half of his individuality consisting of pride, the other half of humbleness. He debases himself: throughout the many volumes which make up his works, you will seek in vain for a word of personal vanity, or pride, or self-glorification. Only self-depreciation is to be found in his books, self-disgust, self-accusation, self-abasement. All the pride he possesses is lavished on his race and on the idea of his nation. Everything that relates to himself as an isolated individual he discards; everything that is impersonal to himself, everything that relates to the Russian in him, to the universally human in him, he idolizes. His disbelief in God forces him to become God's advocate; his disbelief in himself makes

him the prophet of his nation and of mankind. Even in the realm of ideas he is a martyr, who nails himself to the cross in order to redeem the Idea.

This is Dostoeffsky's great secret: to acquire fruitfulness by means of contrast. To strain a contrast into the infinite so that it embraces the whole world, and to utilize the energies thence derived so as to promote man's future welfare: such is his aim. Other writers construct an ideal by magnifying their own personalities, for they create replicas of themselves, replicas cleansed, clarified, bettered, ennobled; thus their conception of future man is little more than a transfigured image of their own type. Dostoeffsky, however, builds up his ideal from his own antithesis, debasing himself, the living man, to a mere negative. All he wishes to be is the mould into which the new form is to be poured, so that in the future what was Dostoeffsky's left hand shall become the new man's right, the hollows shall be transformed into elevations, doubt into faith, duality into unity. "I myself would willingly perish if only others might be happy," exclaims Father Zosima. Dostoeffsky looks at the matter in a more spiritual way, for he annihilates himself as a personality in order to find resurrection in the future man.

Dostoeffsky's ideal is, therefore, to be what he is not, to feel as he does not feel, to think as he does not think, to live as he does not live. Into the tiniest details of his anatomy, the new man is to be Dostoeffsky's opposite; everything that is shadowy in Dostoeffsky is to be clear-cut in the future being; out of his Nay the coming Yea is to be born. He carries his condemnation of himself so far as to include even his individual physique, that everything may be to the advantage of the man who is to arise hereafter. He destroys the egocentric man for the sake of the universal man.

If we study the pictures we have of him, his photographs and his death-mask, and lay these beside the portraits he has given us of his ideal man, what do we find? That Alyosha Karamazoff, Father Zosima, Prince Myshkin (the three sketches he made of the Russian Christ, of the saviour) are the very opposites of what he was himself. Dostoeffsky's face is gloomy, enigmatic, and sad; these others are cheerful, and animated with peace and candour. His voice is husky and his speech abrupt; they talk in low, soft tones. His hair is harsh, and dark in colour, his eyes deep-set and restless; they are fair and their faces are framed in silky locks, their glance betrays neither anxiety nor agitation. He tells us that they look out upon the world with steady eyes, wherein one can detect the sweet smile of a child. His lips are thin and scornful and passionate, and know not how to laugh; Alyosha and Zosima laugh freely, like men who are sure of themselves, and as they laugh their white teeth flash merrily. His countenance is that of a fettered man, the slave of his passions; it is burdened with thought: their faces express inner freedom, the total lack of inhibitions, the complete absence of suspense. He is a duality, torn and rent; they are harmonious, each man constituting a unity in himself. He is the egocentric man, pent within his own personality; they are types of the universally human, soaring upward towards God.

This creation of a moral ideal sired by self-destruction has never been more successfully accomplished, whether we consider the deed from the mental or from the ethical outlook. Filled with a sense of self-reprobation, he cuts open his veins in order with his own blood to paint the picture of the man of a later day. He himself represents the passion-fraught man, the convulsive being, the creature whose en-

thusiasms are no more than explosions of the senses or furious conflagrations of the nerves. They are gentle flames, constant in their glow. They persevere in their undertakings, and achieve far more than Dostoeffsky does by his erratic leaps and bounds from despondency to ecstasy. They have true meekness in their hearts, and do not fear to make themselves ridiculous; they are not, as he is, perpetually being affronted and lowered in their self-esteem. They can talk freely with everybody, and all who come into contact with them feel at ease; they are not perpetually harassed by a hysterical anxiety lest they give offence to others or themselves be insulted; they do not glance round apprehensively at every step they take. God torments them no longer, but comforts them. They know about everything, and because everything is an open book to them they can forgive all, neither judging others nor condemning themselves; they do not brood upon the veracity of things, but believe in them simply, and are thankful. It is strange indeed to find a man so agitated as Dostoeffsky holding these free-and-easy people to be the highest form of life; to find a man so divided as he postulating unity as the ultimate ideal; to find the revolutionary postulating submission. The martyrdom he has suffered at God's hands has turned to ineffable beatitude; his doubt has become certainty; his hysteria, health; his pain, an all-embracing happiness. The last and most beautiful thing of existence is that which he, the conscious and super-conscious individual, never knew, and what he therefore esteems the sublimest thing a man can possess: naivety, a child's ingenuous heart, a sweet and natural cheerfulness.

His favourite characters go about with a gentle smile upon their lips; they are omniscient, and yet no pride in-

flates them; they dwell in the secret places of life, not as in a fiery pit, but as in the blue vault of heaven. Theirs is the primal peace of existence; they have vanquished pain and anxiety, and have become filled with a boundless sense of the brotherhood of things. They have been released from the ego, and have attained to the highest felicity known to the children of this world: impersonality. Thus this most finished individualist has transformed the wisdom of a Goethe into a new creed.

In the history of the human spirit there is no other example of so complete a self-annihilation; nor has it been given us to witness elsewhere so admirable a creation of an ideal out of personal contrasts. Dostoeffsky is his own executioner. He nails his knowledge to the cross, that it may testify to belief. His body is racked, that it may, through the instrumentality of art, bring forth the new man; and his personal unity is sacrificed to the totality of mankind. He desires his own destruction, that a happier humanity may arise; he takes upon himself the full burden of suffering, that others may rejoice. During all the sixty years of his life, he keeps the string of his own contradictions taut, with the result that he is in perpetual torment; he rummages in the depths of his own soul trying to find God, and therewith the meaning of life. Yet he is willing to throw all the knowledge thus acquired to the winds of heaven for the sake of the new humanity; and he even discloses to the future man the most treasured secret, the ultimate formula, the most unforgettable truth, namely: "Thou shalt love life more than the meaning of life."

VITA TRIUMPHATRIX

Be it what it may, life is a splendid thing.

GOETHE

How dark is the way through Dostoeffsky's depths, how gloomy is the landscape, how oppressive is the interminable road, how awesomely it resembles the devastating tragedy of his countenance which has been engraved with all the sorrows life holds in store for mortal man! He leads us through the circles of hell that have been sculptured in the human heart, through the purgatorial fires of the soul, and down into the labyrinthine ways of the underworld of the emotions. How tenebrous is this world of man, how much pain lurks in its shadows! His earth is "drenched with tears to its innermost core." His inferno is a darker and drearier place than Dante's. Here we find the souls of those who were victims of their own earthliness, were martyrs to their own feelings, were clasped in the evils of their own passions, were tortured by all the whips of the mind, while they fretted and fumed in impotent rebellion. What a world! Closed to joyousness and hope, and encircled by a wall so high and strong that all prospect of a rescue is debarred. Can no compassion save these poor souls from the abyss of their own selves? Will no apocalyptic hour arrive to shatter this hell which a son of God created out of his own misery?

Tumult and plaint arise from the pit, and never have

men's ears been assailed by a more lamentable sound. Never has man created a work more full of darkness and despair. Even Michelangelo's figures are less horrid while they lament; and above the gloom of Dante's inferno, paradiso shines serene and clear. Is life really such a nightmare? Is pain in truth the meaning of life? It is terrible to peer into this chasm, to watch the suffering, and to hear the lamentation of our brethren.

But a word arises from these dark depths, softly spoken and yet dominating the clamour. It comes to us like a dove winging her flight across a stormy sea. It is pregnant with meaning, a holy word: "Friends, do not fear life." The tumult is hushed, and a clear voice speaks: "Only by suffering can we learn to love life."

Who utters these consoling words? Dostoeffsky himself, the sufferer of sufferers. His hands are still nailed to the cross of his inner contradictions, but now he kisses the cruel tree of life, and his lips are gentle as they disclose the secret to his fellow-sufferers: "I believe we must first of all learn to love life."

And as he speaks the words, the hour of deliverance strikes. The grave gives up its dead, and the prison its captives; all hasten to become the apostles of his word. They come from the prisons, from the Siberian katorga with chains clanking round their feet, from drinking booths and brothels and monastic cells; all those who suffered the passion of their passions. Their hands are bloody, their backs are striped with the lash of the knout, they are still crippled by anger and bent beneath the load of their infirmities; yet complaints no longer issue from their mouths, and their eyes glisten with tears of confident hope. Again we witness the miracle of Balaam; curses turn to blessings on their

lips, for they hear the Hosanna of their master, the Hosanna "which has passed through the fires of despair." The darkest souls are in the front rank; the saddest and the most faithful believers press forward to bear testimony to the word. And they join in a great chorus to sing the Hymn of Suffering, the Hymn of Life. None are missing: there is Dmitri Karamazoff, the guiltless man who was condemned; his hands still bear the manacles as he chants with the full power of his lungs: "I have such strength in me now that I feel I shall overcome all suffering, if only I may be able to say to myself and repeat every minute: 'I am!' Though tormented with a thousand agonies, still: 'I am!' On the rack: 'I am!' Even when tied to the post of execution: 'I exist!' Whether I see the sun or not, I know that it is there. And to know that the sun is there—is not this a whole life in itself?" Here, too, is Ivan, Dmitri's brother, who, stepping to his side, announces: "There is only one irremediable misfortune: to be dead." The ecstasy of existence pierces his heart like a ray of light as he, the denier of God, exclaims joyfully: "I love you, O God; for life is great." Who is this arising from a coffin, his hands folded meekly on his breast? It is Stefan Trofimovich, the everlasting doubter, saying: "Ah, that I might live my life once more! Every minute, every second, must be felicity." The voices grow increasingly clear and pure and more sublime. Prince Myshkin, upborne on the wings of his soaring senses, stretches wide his arms, and sings inspired: "I cannot understand how one can pass a tree and fail to be happy that it exists and that one is able to love it. How many wonderful things we encounter at every step we take in this life, things that even the most abject of men must find marvellous to behold." Father Zosima declares: "Those who

curse God and curse life are really cursing themselves. . . . If you will only love each thing, the secret of God will be revealed unto you; and in the end you will embrace the whole world in the magnitude of your love." Even the poor little nameless creature from the slum street is there to tell us: "Life is beauty; there is meaning in pain alone; oh how lovely is life!" The "queer fellow," awakening from his dream, is determined "to live and—to preach!" Like worms they crawl from the interstices of their own being to join in the great chorale. None wishes to die, none wishes to leave life the holy beloved, none considers the suffering so great as to wish for the relief that could be given by death the arch-enemy. And suddenly the hymn of destiny re-echoes from the hard walls of this hell of despair, and the fires blaze up in thankfulness. Light, unending light, streams in: Dostoeffsky's heaven opens above the earth, and the last words he ever wrote reverberate in the firmament, the cry of the children after the speech beside the big stone, that holy and barbaric cry: "Hurrah for Karamazoff"—meaning "Hurrah for Life!"

O Life, how wonderful you are that you create martyrs for yourself, martyrs who, knowing what is before them, yet go to their martyrdom singing a hymn of praise as they go: O Life, wise and awful one, who through sufferings innumerable makes thralls out of the greatest among men so that in the end they may proclaim your triumph. Adown the ages the cry of Job is heard, for he was sore afflicted by God, and therefore, O Life, you will ever hearken to his lamentation anew. And the song of the Three Holy Children in the fiery furnace is sweet in your ears. You place red-hot coals upon the tongues of the poets, that they may be your servants and name your name in love.

You strike Beethoven with deafness that he may the better listen to the music of God, and that when death is already knocking at his door he may intone his hymn of joy. You hunt Rembrandt into poverty, that he may seek light, primal light, and convey it to his canvas. You scourge Dante into banishment, that in a dream he may see both heaven and hell. All, all have been chased by you down the everlasting ways. And this Russian, whom you have scourged as none other, you have forced to become your slave, and lo, from his foam-flecked lips he jubilantly shouts his Hosanna, a holy Hosanna that has passed through the fires of despair.

You are the conqueror of the men who suffer through you. You turn night into day, pain into love, and from the pit of hell you conjure forth a hymn of praise. For the wisest man is likewise the man who suffers most; he who knows you cannot but bless you. And this great Russian who knew you better than any before or since, lo, he has borne witness to you as none other, and has loved you more abundantly than they.

PART TWO

The Struggle with the Daimon

HÖLDERLIN

KLEIST

NIETZSCHE

I love those who know not how
to live except through surrender,
for they are on the way elsewhere.

NIETZSCHE

TO

SIGMUND FREUD

INTRODUCTION

The harder it has been for a son of earth
to win to freedom,
The more mightily does he stir his
fellow-men.

CONRAD FERDINAND MEYER

In the present work, just as in my earlier trilogy *Three Masters,* three imaginative writers are portrayed in a way which will show their spiritual fellowship, but this essential unity is not to be represented with undue concreteness, or as going beyond an allegorical similitude. I am not looking for rigid formulas in which to confine the spiritual, but am disclosing the forms of the spirit. If in my books I deliberately assemble mentalities of like complexion, I do so only after the manner of a painter who likes to hang his pictures in such a room and in such a way that the working of light and counter-light shall bring out analogies of type. Comparison always seems to me a fostering, nay, a formative medium, and I rejoice in it because it is applicable without undue constraint. It enriches where the use of crude formulas impoverishes; it intensifies values inasmuch as it creates illumination by means of unanticipated reflexions, and provides a margin of vacant space wherein to enshrine each likeness. This secret of plastic presentation was already known to the first great master of literary portraiture, Plutarch, who in his *Parallel Lives* gave paired descriptions of a Greek notable and a Roman, that behind their personalities the shadow counterpart, the spiritual type, might be made plain. Just as that illustrious writer worked

in the field of historical biography, so do I design to work in the kindred field of literary and characterological biography. *Three Masters* and *The Struggle with the Daimon* are the opening volumes of a series dealing with Master Builders, or an Attempt at the Typology of the Spirit. Far be it from me to dream of forcing the inhabitants of the world of genius into the pigeon-holes of a rigid system. Fired by a passion for psychological study and driven by a creative urge, I do but follow my bent towards the sculpturing of the figures of those to whom I am bound by the most intimate sympathies. By my own limitations, barriers are imposed against a striving for completeness; nor do I regret such fragmentary treatment, which would only be a source of grief to one who believed that creative work could be systematized, and who should arrogantly suppose that the infinite universe of the mind might be confined within definite boundaries. The thing that allures me in my plan is that it reaches out into infinity and knows nothing of frontiers. Thus it is that, at once slowly and ardently, with hands working in a way that still seems strange even to myself, I continue to build a chance-begotten edifice upwards into the little portion of time that hangs dubiously over the life of every mortal.

Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche are obviously alike even in respect of the outward circumstances of their lives; they stand under the same horoscopical aspect. One and all they were hunted by an overwhelming, a so-to-say superhuman power, were hunted out of the warmth and cosiness of ordinary existence into a cyclone of devastating passion, to perish prematurely amid storms of mental disorder, and one of them by suicide. With no moorings in their own epoch, misunderstood by their generation, they

flashed like meteors athwart the night of their mission. They themselves knew not whither they were bound, nor had they any grasp of their significance, as they hurtled towards the infinite in a parabola which seemed scarcely to touch our world of actualities. A power greater than theirs was working within them, so that they felt themselves rushing aimlessly through the void. In their rare moments of full awareness of self, they knew that their actions were not the outcome of their own volition, but that they were thralls, were possessed (in both senses of the word) by a higher power, the daimonic.

"Daimonic"—this word has had so many connotations imposed upon it, has been so variously interpreted, in the course of its wanderings from the days of ancient religious mythology into our own time, that I must explain the sense in which I shall use it in this book. I term "daimonic" the unrest that is in us all, driving each of us out of himself into the elemental. It seems as if nature had implanted into every mind an inalienable part of the primordial chaos, and as if this part were interminably striving—with tense passion—to rejoin the superhuman, suprasensual medium whence it derives. The daimon is the incorporation of that tormenting leaven which impels our being (otherwise quiet and almost inert) towards danger, immoderation, ecstasy, renunciation, and even self-destruction. But in those of common clay, this factor of our composition which is both precious and perilous proves comparatively ineffective, is speedily absorbed and consumed. In such persons only at rare moments, during the crises of puberty or when, through love or the generative impulse, the inward cosmos is heated to boiling-point, does the longing to escape from the familiar groove, to renounce the trite and the commonplace, exert its mysterious sway. At other times the average

man keeps a tight hand on any stirrings of the Faustian impulse, chloroforming it with the dicta of conventional morality, numbing it with work, restraining its wild waters behind the dams of the established order. By temperament and training the humdrum citizen is an inveterate enemy of the chaotic, not only in the outer world, but in himself as well. In persons of finer type, however, and above all in those with strongly productive inclinations, the unrestful element is ever at work, showing itself as dissatisfaction with the daily round, creating that "higher heart which afflicts itself" (Dostoeffsky), that questioning spirit which expands with its yearnings into the abysses of the limitless universe. Whatever strives to transcend the narrower boundaries of self, o'erleaping immediate personal interests to seek adventures in the dangerous realm of inquiry, is the outcome of the daimonic constituent of our being. But the daimon is not a friendly and helpful power unless we can hold him in leash, can use him to promote a wholesome tension and to assist us on our upward path. He becomes a menace when the tension he fosters is excessive, and when the mind is a prey to the rebellious and volcanically eruptive urge of the daimonic. For the daimon cannot make his way back to the infinite which is his home except by ruthlessly destroying the finite and the earthly which restrains him, by destroying the body wherein, for a season, he is housed. He works, as with a lever, to promote expansion, but threatens in so doing to shatter the tenement. That is why those of an exceptionally "daimonic temperament," those who cannot early and thoroughly subdue the daimon within them, are racked by disquietude. Ever and again the daimon snatches the helm from their control and steers them (helpless as straws in the blast) into the heart of the storm, perchance to shatter them on the rocks of destiny.

Restlessness of the blood, the nerves, the mind, is always the herald of the daimonic tempest; and that is why we call daimonic those women who diffuse unrest wherever they go and who open the sluices to let loose the waters of destruction. The daimonic bodes danger, carries with it an atmosphere of tragedy, breathes doom.

Thus it comes to pass that everyone whose nature excels the commonplace, everyone whose impulses are creative, wrestles perforce with his daimon. This is a combat of titans, a struggle between lovers, the most splendid contest in which we mortals can engage. Many succumb to the daimon's fierce onslaught as the woman succumbs to the passion of the impetuous male; they are overpowered by his preponderant strength; they feel themselves joyfully permeated by the fertilizing element. Many subjugate him; their cold, resolute, purposive will constrains his ardours to accept their guidance even while he animates their energies. Often the embrace which is a wrestle and the wrestle which is an embrace persist for a lifetime. In the artist and his work the great encounter becomes, as it were, symbolical; his every nerve is thrilled by the sensuous union between his spirit and its perpetual seducer. Only in the creative genius does the daimonic succeed in making its way out of the shadows of feeling into the regions of language and of light; and we discern the daimon's passionate features most plainly in those who have been mastered by him, in the imaginative writers whom he leads whithersoever he wills—in such as the three men I have chosen as most typical of their kind in the German world: Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche. For if in an imaginative writer the daimon rules autocratically, there flames up in him a peculiar kind of art; he becomes, as it were, drunken with his art; he gives himself up to a fren-

zied, febrile creation; there occurs in him a spasmodic exaltation of spirit, convulsive, explosive, orgiastic, the μανία of the Greeks, characteristic of the prophet and the pythoness. The measureless, the superlative, is the first unmistakable token of this form of art—an unceasing endeavour to outdo oneself in the effort to reach that limitless sphere to which the daimonic properly belongs. Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche were of the Promethean race which is in revolt against customary forms and tends thereby to destroy itself. The uncanny light of the daimon flashes from their eyes, and it is he who speaks through their lips. He continues, indeed, to speak through their lips when otherwise they would be dumb; and his strength makes itself manifest in them when nothing else remains to quicken the spirit and when the bodily forces are far advanced in decay. Never is the dread guest more plainly perceptible than when the mind of the host, rent asunder by formidable tensions, has collapsed, and the onlooker catches a glimpse of the inmost abysses where the daimon lurks. In all three of those whom this book concerns, daimonic strength (previously veiled) became conspicuous when the guiding intelligence of the ordinary self had tottered and fallen.

To throw light upon the mysterious essence of the writer who has been overpowered by his daimon, to elucidate the true nature of the daimonic, I have (faithful to my method of comparison) inconspicuously delineated an opposing player, as counterpart to the three tragical heroes. But the counterpart to the writer who soars upon the pinions of an uncontrolled daimonism is not one who is himself undaimonic. There is no art worthy of the name without daimonism, no great art that does not voice the music of the spheres. No one ever bore more convincing testimony to this than the arch-foe of all that was daimonic, the man who was so

unsympathetic to the lives of Kleist and of Hölderlin, namely, Goethe, who said to Eckermann of the daimonic: "Productivity of the highest kind, every notable aperçu . . . is subject to no one's control and is uplifted above earthly power." Great art cannot exist without inspiration, and inspiration derives from an unknown, from a region outside the domain of the waking consciousness. For me, the true counterpart of the spasmodically exalted writer, divinely presumptuous, carried out of himself by the exuberance of uncontrolled forces, is the writer who can master these forces, the writer whose mundane will is powerful enough to tame and to guide the daimonic element that has been instilled into his being. To guide as well as to tame, for daimonic power, magnificent though it be and the source of creative artistry, is fundamentally aimless, striving only to re-enter the chaos out of which it sprang. Unquestionably great art, art nowise inferior to the daimonic, emerges when an artist wins mastery over this elemental force and imposes on it whatever direction he pleases, when he "commands" poesy as Goethe commanded it, and gives the "incommensurable" a definite form; when, in a word, he becomes the daimon's master instead of the daimon's thrall.

Goethe—there you have the name for the antithetical type which holds symbolical sway throughout this book. Not merely as a scientist, not merely as a geologist, was Goethe "an adversary of Vulcanism" [the Plutonic theory]; in art, likewise, he championed the evolutionary against the eruptive, fighting with unusual bitterness against the convulsive, the volcanic, the daimonic manifestations of genius. Yet the embitterment shows more clearly than anything else that for him, too, the contest with the daimon had been the decisive problem of his art. In this field had taken place the struggle for its existence. He could not have regarded

the daimon as so terrible an enemy had he not himself wrestled with the fiend, and looked shudderingly into the gorgon's face. Somewhere in the thorny thicket of his youth, Goethe must have fought the battle to a finish. We learn it from *Werther*, the book in which he prophetically averted from himself the fate of Kleist and of Tasso, of Hölderlin and of Nietzsche! The encounter must have been alarming, for throughout life Goethe retained a fierce respect for and was inspired with an unconcealed fear of the powers of his formidable adversary. With the diviner's skill, he recognized his enemy through all disguises: in Beethoven's music, in Kleist's *Penthesilea*, in Shakespeare's tragedies, which in later years he desisted from reading ("it would disturb me"); and the more his thoughts and energies were directed into constructive work and concerned with self-preservation, the more sedulous was he to escape every possibility of such "disturbance." He knew what was the upshot when an artist surrendered to the daimon; that was why he was ever on the alert to defend himself, and why he warned others against the lion in the path—though his warnings were fruitless. Goethe manifested as much heroic energy in saving himself from surrender as do the daimonic display in their self-surrender. He, too, was striving for supreme freedom; he was fighting to sustain a measure amid the immeasurable, and to secure his own fulfilment, whereas those others were surrendering to the urge towards the infinite.

Only in this sense have I contraposed Goethe's figure to those of the thralls of the daimon, those of Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche; not in the sense of any active rivalry (though such a rivalry existed in their lives). I needed a great voice of the obverse kind, to make it clear that though I venerate the bacchic, the hymnic, the titanic as set forth

in my account of the three imaginative writers to whose life and work this book is devoted, I do not regard these qualities as necessarily characteristic of the most valuable or of the sublimest art. The contrast between the two kinds of art seems to me, indeed, to bring us face to face with an intensely interesting problem in spiritual polarity; and I shall do well to give a plain account of certain aspects of this immanent antithesis. With something that approaches the clarity of mathematical formulæ, the contrast, beginning in the abstract realm of form, extends into the most trifling episodes of the protagonists' bodily lives, so that nothing but a direct comparison between Goethe and his daimonic counterparts will serve—as a comparison between supreme but divergent kinds of mental achievement—to throw light upon the enigma.

The first thing that is obvious in Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche is their detachment from the world. The daimon plucks away from realities those whom he holds in his grip. Not one of the three had wife or children, any more than had their congeners Beethoven and Michelangelo; they had neither fixed home nor permanent possessions, neither settled occupation nor secure footing in the world. They were nomads, vagrants, eccentrics; they were despised and rejected; they lived in the shadows. Not one of them ever had a bed to call his own; they sat in hired chairs, wrote at hired desks, and wandered from one lodging-house to another. Nowhere did they take root; not even Eros could establish binding ties for those whom the jealous daimon had espoused. Their friendships were transitory, their appointments fugitive, their work unremunerative; they stood ever in vacant spaces and created in the void. Thus their existence was like that of shooting stars, which flash on indeterminable paths, whereas Goethe circled in a fixed

orbit. Or (to return to a previous metaphor) Goethe was firmly established upon solid earth, into which his roots spread ever wider and deeper. He had wife and children and grandchildren; women garlanded his life; intercourse with a small group of tried and trusted friends suffused his leisure with content. He lived in a large, well-appointed house, which he filled by degrees with rarities and art-treasures; he was comforted by the warmth of an assured reputation, unchallenged for the half-century and more during which he survived as an acknowledged master. He had offices and dignities conferred upon him; was a privy councillor and was styled "His Excellency"; and, on gala occasions, orders innumerable glittered on his broad chest. While those others developed their capacities for wild flights in the mental empyrean, but on the earth grew more unstable as the years passed, running hither and thither like hunted beasts, Goethe, increasingly subject to the force of terrestrial gravity, became continually more steadfast. Where he stood was the centre of his ego, and at the same time the intellectual focus of the nation. From this fixed point his tranquil activities embraced the world, his ties extending far beyond human fellowship to form attachments with the lower animals, with plants, and with inanimate nature, wedding him creatively to the foundations of mundane existence.

Like Dionysus, the thralls of the daimon were torn to pieces by the titans; whereas Goethe, having subdued the daimon, was self-controlled to the end. His career was a strategic conquest of the world; whilst they, fighting heroically but without set purpose, were driven forth from the world and had to flee into the infinite. They were constrained to drag themselves away from the terrene in order to merge themselves in the supramundane, but Goe-

the need take only one step from the earth in order to find himself in the limitless expanse, or could slowly and patiently draw the limitless into his finite grasp. His method was thus essentially capitalistic, the method of capitalist accumulation. Year after year he stored a definite amount of experience as intellectual profit, entering it like a careful bookkeeper in his "diaries" and "annals," his life bearing interest as a tilled field bears fruit. Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche, on the other hand, were gamblers, staking their all with magnificent indifference upon the turn of a single card, to win or to lose a measureless prize; for the daimon loathes the tedious heaping-up of petty gains in a savings-box. Experience, which for a Goethe is the very core of life, was for them of no account; their sufferings taught them only how to feel more intensely; and, a prey to fitful enthusiasms, they lost track of their own selves. In contrast with them, Goethe was the unceasing learner; the book of life was for him something to be mastered conscientiously, diligently, page after page and line upon line; always he continued to regard himself as a student, and not until old age was upon him did he venture the mystical utterance:

> I have learned how to live; grant me, ye gods, more time.

For Kleist, Hölderlin, and Nietzsche, living was not to be learned, nor worth learning; their intuition of a loftier existence was of far more significance than perception and sensuous experience. What their genius did not give them freehandedly did not exist for them. They cared for nothing but that which was poured for them out of his horn of plenty; and they could be spurred to exertion only by impulses from within, by the ardour of their superheated feelings. Fire became their element; flame, their mode of activity; and their lives were perpetually scorched in the

furnaces which alone made their work possible. As time went on, they grew ever more lonely, more estranged from the world of men; whereas for Goethe, hour by hour, each moment that ticked away was richer than those which had gone before. The daimon within them grew stronger, the lure of the infinite more overpowering; there was privation of life in the beauty they fashioned, and beauty gushed forth from their lack of personal joys.

These polar differences in outlook explain why geniuses of the one group and of the other (despite the kinship which genius gives) differ so profoundly in their valuations of reality. To the daimonic temperament reality seems inadequate: Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche, each in his own way, were rebels against the established order. They would rather break than yield, uncompromising even at pain of death and annihilation. This makes them superb figures of tragedy—indeed, their whole life is one long tragedy. Goethe conversely (how frankly he understands himself!) admits to Zelter that he does not feel himself born to be a tragic dramatist, "for my temperament is conciliatory." He does not, like those others, want unending warfare; as a "preservative" and "pacifying force," he wants compromise and harmony. With a sentiment to which one can only give the name of piety, he subordinates himself to life as to a higher power, as to the supreme power, which he reveres in all its forms and phases, saying: "Life is good, whatever turn it takes." But from those who are tormented by the daimon, and hounded by him through the world, nothing is further than the thought of paying homage to reality. They do not value reality at a pin's fee; they revere nothing but the infinite, and for them art is the only way of reaching it. That is why they esteem art more than life, poesy more than reality. Like Michelangelo in his blind

ardour hewing at thousands of blocks of marble, with frenzied zeal they cut their way along the dark galleries of the innermost self towards the sparkling stone revealed to them in their dreams as present in the hidden depths; whereas Goethe (like Leonardo) feels that art is but one of the manifold forms of life, dear to him just as science and philosophy are dear, a fragment, a small and effective constituent of his life. That is why the forms of daimonic activity grow more intensive, whilst those of a Goethe grow more extensive. Höderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche transform their being in the direction of an overwhelming particularity, ostensibly unconditioned; Goethe moves continually in the direction of an increasingly comprehensive universality.

A love for extant reality directs Goethe's aims (the aims of the anti-daimonic genius) towards security, towards a wise self-preservation. By their contempt for reality the daimonic geniuses are impelled to take gamblers' chances, to march towards danger, towards violent self-expansion, ending in self-destruction. In Goethe, all forces work centripetally, moving from the periphery towards the core; in the daimonics the will-to-power operates centrifugally, striving away from the innermost circle of life, inevitably disrupting it. This flight into fathomless space, this overflow into the formless, is sublimated most conspicuously in a fondness for music. There, where shore and shape are lacking, they can drift unguided into their proper element, so that in decay Hölderlin and Nietzsche, and even the harsher-fibered Kleist, gave themselves up to its magic. Understanding is resolved into ecstasy, language into rhythm. Always (in Lenau likewise) music heralds the onrush of the daimonic spirit. On the other hand Goethe's attitude towards music is "cautious and reserved." He dreads its

beguiling force, its capacity to distract the will towards unessentials; in his hours of strength he forcibly represses his interest in it—even in Beethoven. Only in moments of weakness, when he is ailing or in love, does he surrender to its charm. He finds his true element in drawing, in the plastic arts; in all that offers concrete forms; in all that imposes limits upon the vague, the shapeless; in all that hinders the disintegration of matter. The daimonics love that which unbinds, that which confers freedom, that which leads back into the chaos of feeling: but he, with his scientific instinct for self-preservation, grasps at everything which furthers individual stability; he acclaims order, normality, form, and law.

In a hundred other ways I could dilate upon this fruitful contrast between those who mastered the daimon and those whom he held in thrall, but shall content myself with a reference to the geometrical as the plainest of them all. The formula of Goethe's life was the circle, a closed curve; that of an existence perfectly rounded and self-contained, with a boundary returning ever into itself, perpetually equidistant from the centre, developing steadily outwards from within. That is why there is no culminating point in Goethe's career, no topmost summit of production. His nature grew equably on every side. But, as already indicated, the daimonics' curve is the parabola: a steep, impetuous ascent, an uprush into limitless space, a brusque change of direction, followed by a no less steep, a no less impetuous decline. The climax, both in respect of imaginative creation and in respect of the artist's personal life, is reached immediately before the fall. There is a strange coincidence here. The collapse of the daimonics' career, the personal collapse of Hölderlin and Kleist and Nietzsche, is an integral constituent of their destiny. This collapse is needed to complete the picture,

just as the descending limb of the parabola completes the geometrical figure. Goethe's death, on the other hand, is an inconspicuous point in the circle, adding naught of moment to the story of his life. He dies, not like those others, a mysterious, heroic, quasi-legendary death; he dies a patriarch, in his bed, and vainly has the popular myth that he died with the words "More light" on his lips endeavoured to give a symbolic or prophetic significance to his last hour. Such a life ends only because it has been fulfilled; but the life of the daimonic terminates in an explosion or a conflagration. In the latter case death compensates for the material poverty of life, surrounding its close with an aura of mystery; and he whose career has been a tragedy is vouchsafed a hero's end.

Passionate self-surrender to absorption into the elemental, on the one hand, and passionate self-maintenance with a stubborn insistence upon personal guidance, on the other —both forms of the struggle with the daimon need fortitude, and both are glorious victories in the realm of mind. Alike in Goethe's fulfilment of life and in the creative self-immolation of the daimonics, there is achieved (though in different ways) the same task—that of making unbounded demands upon life. If, in this book, I have contrasted the divergent types of character, it has been in order to reveal the antithetic beauties of the two. It has never been my wish to establish rival scales of value, and still less to lend weight to the conventional, nay, trivial diagnosis, that Goethe represented health and the thralls of the daimon disease, that Goethe was normal whilst they were pathological. This word "pathological" applies only to the lower world, the world of the unproductive; for when illness creates the imperishable it is no longer illness but a form of super-health, the best health there is. Even though the daimonic is at

the utmost marge of life, and passes beyond that marge into untrodden and unattainable fields, it is none the less part of the very substance of mankind and lies within the sphere of the natural. For nature herself, who for millenniums has conferred upon the seed its miracle of growth and has granted the embryo power to develop in the mother's womb, nature herself, though subject to law, knows her daimonic moments, her phases of outbreak and excess, when (in thunderstorms, in cyclones, in cataclysms) she fiercely lavishes her forces and seems bent on self-destruction. She too at times—though rarely, just as persons of daimonic type are rare—ceases to move in accordance with her usual bland routine; but only then, only in her outbursts, do we become aware of her full might. Nothing but the exceptional makes adequate appeal to our senses; nothing but dread of unfamiliar forces sets our feelings puissantly athrill. That is why the extraordinary is always the standard of greatness. Invariably, even in its most perplexing and most dangerous manifestations, the creative genius has a value supreme over other values, a meaning profounder than that of all other meanings.

'Tis hard for mortals to recognize the pure of heart.

THE DEATH OF EMPEDOCLES

Hölderlin

1770–1843

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A SPLENDID COMPANY OF YOUTHS

Night would for ever reign supreme, and
cold would be the earth,
The soul would be consumed by bitter
need, did not the gods,
In their goodness, send down such youths
from time to time
To refresh the wilting lives of mortal
men.

THE DEATH OF EMPEDOCLES

When the nineteenth century was young, it was not fond of its young people. A new and ardent generation had arisen. Boldly and strenuously, in a Europe whose traditions had been shattered, it was marching from all quarters towards the dawn of unprecedented freedom. The bugles of the revolution had awakened it, and, rejoicing in the springtime, it was inspired with a vigorous faith. Before he was thirty, Camille Desmoulins, with a hardy gesture, had razed the Bastille to the ground; a year or two older, Robespierre, the barrister from Arras, had made kings and emperors tremble before the blast of his decrees; Bonaparte, the little lieutenant, a Corsican by birth, had with his sword shaped the frontiers of Europe as he willed, and had seized the most splendid crown in the world—these deeds had made the impossible seem possible, had brought the splendours of the earth within the grasp of any man possessed of unshrinking courage. Youth's hour had struck. In the warmth of the vernal showers, the fresh green shoots of enthusiasm were sprouting everywhere from the soil.

Young folk were lifting their eyes towards the stars, were storming across the threshold of the coming century, their own by right divine. The eighteenth century had belonged to the old and the wise, to Voltaire and Rousseau, to Leibniz and Kant, to Haydn and Wieland, to the cautious and the patient, to the great and the learned; now the times had ripened for youth and valour, for passion and impetuousness. Mighty was the wave in which they swept forward. Never since the days of the Renaissance had Europe known a more magnificent surge of the spirit.

But the new century did not like this intrepid offspring. It dreaded the exuberance, was mistrustful of the ecstasy, of its youthful enthusiasts. Relentlessly it mowed down the crop as soon as the tender green showed above ground. By hundreds of thousands the most intrepid were slaughtered in the Napoleonic wars; for fifteen years the noblest and the best were ground to powder in this murderous mill; France, Germany, Italy, the snowfields of Russia, and the deserts of Egypt, were littered with their bones. Nor was it enough to slay the body; the soul likewise was destroyed. Murderous wrath did not stop short after weeding out the warriors. The axe fell with equal truculence upon dreamers and singers who had scarcely emerged from boyhood when the century was opening. Never before in so short a time had there been offered up such a hecatomb of writers and artists as those who went to their deaths soon after Schiller (not suspecting the imminence of his own doom) had acclaimed their genius. Never had fate sickled such an abundance of illustrious and rathe-ripe figures. Never had the altar of the gods been sprinkled with so much divine blood.

They died in manifold ways, prematurely, in the hour of vigorous burgeoning. André Chénier, a young Apollo through whom classical Greece was reborn in France, was

driven to the guillotine in one of the last tumbrils of the Terror. Had he been granted twenty-four hours more, had he survived the night between the Eighth and the Ninth Thermidor, he would have been saved from the scaffold and would have been restored to his work as a poet in whom the spirit of the singers of ancient Greece had found a new home. But destiny was inexorable, and would spare him no more than the others on whom her doom had been spoken. In England, after a long lapse into the commonplace, a lyrical genius had come to life, John Keats, delicately attuned to the beauties of the universe—to sing sweetly for a few short years and die at twenty-five. Shelley, his brother in the spirit, the ardent being to whom nature had revealed her loveliest mysteries, mourned over his grave; "Adonais" was the sublimest elegy ever conceived by one poet for another; yet in little more than a year Shelley was drowned wantonly in a storm and his body was washed ashore on the Tyrrhene strand. Byron, Shelley's friend and Goethe's favourite heir, hastened to the spot to erect a pyre beside the southern sea and burn the poet's corpse as Achilles burned that of his dead comrade-at-arms Patroclus; Shelley's mortal remains thus flamed into the Italian skies, but Byron himself was to die of fever two years later at Missolonghi. Within a decade the finest lyrical voices of France and England were stilled for ever. Nor was Germany spared a like destiny. Novalis, whose mystical piety had given him insight into the secrets of nature, had his light too soon extinguished, like that of a taper in a draughty cell; Kleist blew out his brains in despair; Raimund, too, committed suicide; Georg Büchner perished of a nervous fever when only twenty-four; Wilhelm Hauff, a writer of fantasies, had no time for his genius to ripen, and went down to the tomb at the age of twenty-five; Schu-

bert died of typhus before he was thirty-two. The members of this younger generation were laid low by the bludgeons and poisons of disease, by the frenzy of self-destruction, by the duellist's pistol or the assassin's dagger. Leopardi, the philosopher of despair, succumbed to a long and painful malady at thirty-nine; Bellini, the composer of *Norma*, was but thirty-four when illness carried him away; Griboedoff, the satirist, the brightest intelligence of awakening Russia, was the same age when stabbed in Teheran by a Persian. His body was brought to Tiflis, and it chanced that in the Caucasus, another great Russian genius, Pushkin, encountered the funeral procession. But Pushkin, too, died young, and by violence, being killed in a duel. Not one of these men lived to be forty, few of them to be thirty. The most luxuriant lyrical blossoming Europe had known was nipped in the bud; devastated was the splendid company of youths who in so many tongues were singing pæans to nature and glorifying the world. Lonely as Merlin in the enchanted forest, unacquainted with the new time, half forgotten and half legendary, Goethe, the ancient sage, lived on at Weimar; there were no lips but his, withered with age, to voice an Orphic lay. At once progenitor and inheritor of this new generation into which he had persisted, he cherished and tended the fires of poesy in a brazen urn.

One only of the splendid company, the most typical, survived for many, many years in the world whence the gods had fled—Hölderlin, whose fate was the strangest of them all. His lips were still ruddy; his ageing frame still moved to and fro across the German soil; still did he gaze through the window at the beloved landscape of the Neckar; he could still raise his eyes affectionately towards "Father Ether," the eternal sky. But his senses were no

longer awake, being shrouded in an unending dream. The jealous gods, though they had not slain him, had blinded the man who had made their secrets known, had treated him as they had treated Tiresias the seer. His mind was enwrapped in a veil. With disordered senses, this man, "sold into slavery to the celestial powers," lived on for decades, dead to himself and to the world, while nothing but rhythms, waves of unmeaning sound, issued from his lips. The springtide with its blossoms came and went, the season he had been so fond of passed him by, for he noted neither its advent nor its going any more. Men flourished and died, and he paid no heed. Schiller and Goethe and Kant and Napoleon, the great figures of his prime, had preceded him into the grave; steam-driven trains were thundering on iron roads across the Germany of his youthful visions. Huge towns were arising, new territories were being formed; but naught in these great changes stirred the numb intelligence. His hair was grey. The ghost of the man he had once been, he tottered hither and thither through the streets of Tübingen, made mock of by the children, despised by the students, none of whom could discern the marvellous mind that lay dormant behind the tragic mask. Long time, now, since anyone had given a thought to Hölderlin. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, Bettina von Arnim became aware that the poet whom in her youth she had acclaimed as a god was lingering on in a carpenter's house, and she was as much startled as if one of the shades had come back to earth from Hades—so forgotten were Hölderlin's glories, so faded was his name. When at length he died, his passing attracted no more attention in the German world than the falling of an autumn leaf. Workmen bore his coffin to the burial place. Of the thousands upon thousands of manuscript pages he

left, many were torn up and burned, while others remained to yellow and moulder in one library or another. Unread, unrecognized by a whole generation was the message of this last and purest of the splendid company.

Like a Greek statue buried in the earth, Hölderlin's image was hidden for decades in the rubbish-heap of oblivion. But just as, in the end, careful and loving hands have disinterred the works of the ancient sculptors, so has it happened with Hölderlin; and our generation has been amazed at the beauty of this marble figure. He lives once more as the last embodiment of German Hellenism, his inspiration, as erstwhile, finding expression in song. The springtides that he proclaimed seem immortalized in his personality; and, with the transfigured visage of the illuminate, he has emerged from darkness into the light of a new dawn.

CHILDHOOD

From their tranquil home the gods oft send,
For a brief space, their darlings down to earth,
That, moved by the sight of such sublimity,
Remembering, the hearts of mortals may rejoice.

Hölderlin was born at Lauffen, a quaint old village on the Neckar, some few leagues downstream from Schiller's birthplace at Marbach. This Swabian countryside is the most appealing in Germany, it is the "Italy of the North." The Alps are not so near as to tower oppressively, and are yet within range; the streams run in silver curves amid pleasant vineyards; and among those who dwell there the harshness of the Alamannic stock is tempered by a cheerfulness which frequently finds vent in song. The land is fertile without undue luxuriance; nature is bountiful without being spendthrift; there is no sharp line of division between handicrafts and peasant agriculture. It is the true homeland of idyllic verse, this region where man's elementary needs are easily satisfied; and even a poet whose mind is shadowed with gloom loses some of his bitterness when his thoughts fly back to the scenes of his childhood:

Angels of this our land! O you before whom even the strongest
Must in his loneliness bow, bending a reverent knee,
Seeking support from his friends, and praying the help of his dear ones,
That they may gladly take part, share in the burden of joy—
Bountiful angels, be thanked!

With what elegiac tenderness does the singer, his melancholy notwithstanding, write of Swabia, whose sky means more to him than the skies of the wider world; how measured become his ecstasies when his mind returns to early memories. Compelled to leave his homeland, betrayed by the Hellas he had so fervently adored, frustrated in his hopes, he can still rejoice in the revival of youthful impressions, and embody them in verse:

Land where the smiling slopes have one and all of them vineyards!
Down on the lush green grass tumbles in autumn the fruit;
Gladly the sunkissed mountains bathe their feet in the rivers,
Their heads wearing as crowns garlands of shrubs and of moss;
And, like children carried lightly on fatherly shoulders,
Borne on the circling hills, strongholds and farmsteads uprise.

Throughout life Hölderlin yearned for this region where he had spent his childhood, and had enjoyed the happiest hours he was ever to know.

Kindly nature cherished him, kindly women saw to his upbringing, and it was his unhappy fate that his father should have died early, so that there was no one to discipline him by timely severity, no one to harden the muscles of feeling for the contest with his perennial enemy—life. Not in his case was there, as in Goethe's, a pedantic education capable of arousing a sense of responsibility. His only training was in piety, inculcated by his grandmother and his mother (a woman of gentle disposition); and at an early age the dreamer sought refuge from finite actualities in music—that infinity which is the first to lure a sensitive youth. But the idyll was brief. When he was barely fourteen the lad went as boarder to the monastery school of Denkendorf and then to the seminary of Maulbronn. At eighteen he became a student of theology in the university of Tübingen, remaining there till 1793. Thus for nearly

a decade the liberty-loving boy was penned behind walls, under cloistral restraint, and dwelt in the soul-deadening proximity characteristic of a communal existence. The change was too glaring to be other than painful and even disastrous, the change from the freedom of hours spent in roaming through fields or beside the river, of days passed under the affectionate supervision of his mother, to the mechanized routine of a conventual discipline. For Hölderlin these seminary years were what the years as a cadet were for Kleist, years of repression which increased his sensitiveness, producing excessive tensions and leading to a flight from reality. A hidden sore remained, a kink which nothing could straighten. Writing ten years later, he says: "Let me explain to you that since early boyhood I have had a character-trait which is still the one I love best, what I may call a waxen impressionability of disposition; but it was this which was most grossly mishandled so long as I was in the monastery." During those years of repression, the noblest and most intimate element of his faith in life was being so maltreated that it was partly withered before the doors opened and he could return to the sunlight of the outer world. Thus early began, though only in a minor degree, the melancholy and the sense of being forlorn in an uncongenial world which were to cloud his spirit, and in the end to deprive him of all capacity for joy.

Such was the beginning, in the twilight of childhood and during the formative years, of that inward cleavage in Hölderlin, of that pitiless gulf between the world at large and the world of his own self. Here was a wound which never healed. To the end of his days he felt like one who has been driven forth into the wilderness; always he looked back with longing to the happiness of his lost home, which often loomed like a mirage amid his poetic

intuitions and memories, compounded of dreams and the strains of distant music. Perennially immature, he never ceased to feel that he had been snatched from this heaven of his youth to be thrust into a domain of uncongenial realities. That accounted for his hostility to his environment. Throughout life he remained unteachable. Though, from time to time, seeming joys alternated with gloom, happiness with disillusionment, none of these experiences could modify his attitude of alienation from reality. "From my earliest youth the world scared me, so that my mind was thrust back into itself," he once wrote to Neuffer. That was why he could never form binding ties or enter into effective relationships with his fellows, being what modern psychologists call an introvert, one of those who mistrustfully interpose barriers between themselves and stimuli from without, developing exclusively from within through the cultivation of the germinal characteristics implanted in them before birth. Half, at least, of his poems are inspired by the same motif, that of the insoluble opposition between trustful and carefree youth, on the one hand, and the inimical grown-up existence in which all illusions are lost, on the other; that of the contrast between a "practical" life in time and space and a life lived in the abstract world of thought. At twenty he wrote in mournful mood a poem to which he gave the title "Then and Now"; and in his hymn "To Nature" the same melody which from childhood ran ever through his mind rings forth anew:

When I still around thy veil was playing,
Still to thee, as clings a flower, clung,
Felt thy kind heart in every sound and saying—
Soft in answer stirred a heart still young.
When I still, with confidence and yearning,
Rich as thou, before thy image stood,

Place for tears which comfort still discerning,
Loving much a world that still seemed good;

When my spirit sunward still was turning,
Nature, at thy voice, while still in me
Fond affection for the stars was burning,
And the spring seemed God's own melody;
When in the breeze that made the hedges rustle
Sounded still thy voice, alive with joy—
Full of peace, remote from life's harsh tussle,
Those days of gold when I was still a boy!

But following close upon this pæan to childhood comes in a minor key, the answer of the young man so early disillusioned:

Dead and gone the world that trained and nourished,
Nature's breasts are now but fountains sealed,
Rounded breasts that like twin heavens flourished,
Sere now and arid like a stubble-field.
As of yore, when I am full of sorrow,
Spring intones a kind, consoling song,
But, alas, my life no joy can borrow,
Spring in me has withered over-long.

Where we mortals fondest love have cherished,
Love's a shadow. Ring the shadow's knell!
When the golden dreams of childhood perished,
Nature, kindly nature, died as well.
In days when joy's illusion strings the lyre,
You know not that from home you have been rent,
But never will you win your heart's desire
Save when dreams can bring you false content.

In these stanzas Hölderlin's romantic attitude towards life is already fixed; his glance is for ever returning to the "magic cloud in which the good angel of my childhood enveloped me, lest I should too soon catch sight of the petty and the barbarous in the world by which I was surrounded."

Even before attaining his majority, he was angrily barring himself from the inroads of experience. Backwards and upwards were the only two directions in which he was willing to move; never would he enter frankly into life but would only try to pass beyond it. Not even in the form of a struggle with them would he bring himself into touch with the forces of his own time. He devoted his energies to silent endurance, to the maintenance of his unsullied aloofness. Hence his isolation.

In essentials, Hölderlin's development was finished when he left school. Thereafter, no doubt, his qualities became intensified; but there was no further unfolding, no acceptance of new outlooks, no enrichment of his nature. Everyday life seemed to him unmeaning; he would neither learn from it nor take over anything from it; animated by his instinct for purity, he would tolerate no admixture of its multifarious ingredients with his homogeneous personality. Thereby he offended against the world's law, and his destiny became one of atonement for pride, for an overweening yet glorious self-exaltation. The world's law demands admixture, and will tolerate no exemption from the universal circulation of substance. One who refuses to bathe in the warm current of life is left stranded on the shore; the non-participant is foredoomed to solitude. Hölderlin's claim that he should be allowed to serve art and not actual existence, the gods and not his fellow-men, constitutes (let me repeat—in a sublime and transcendental sense), like that of his Empedocles, an intolerable presumption. None but the gods are privileged to live thus apart, in unchallenged purity. What can we expect but that life should take vengeance upon those who disdain it by subjecting them to its meanest forces, by exposing them to the torture of crude starvation, by enforcing the basest servi-

tude upon those who refuse any and every form of service? Because Hölderlin refused to share his goods, all his possessions were reft from him; because he would not allow his spirit to be bound, his whole existence passed into thraldom. Hölderlin's beauty is the very thing he has to suffer for. His faith in a higher world makes him a rebel against this lower world, from which his sole escape is on the pinions of verse. Only when this unteachable hero recognizes the significance of his doom does he for a season become master of his fate. He is vouchsafed no more than the fleeting hours between the rising and the setting of the sun, between the start upon his voyage and the speedily ensuing shipwreck; but the evanescent vision of his youth is a splendid one while it lasts. His ship is encircled by the foaming waves of the infinite; his defiant spirit scales the clouds.

LIKENESS AS A STUDENT IN TÜBINGEN

I never understood the words of men,
But grew up in the arms of the gods.

ALMOST the only portrait of Hölderlin that has come down to us is an early one, and it produces the impression of a gleam of sunshine through a rift in louring clouds. We see a slender youth whose fair hair runs back in a soft wave from a noble forehead. His lips are sharply cut; his cheeks have a tender femininity (one thinks of them as apt to be suffused with blushes); his eyes shine brightly from beneath arched black brows. There is nothing robust in his features, but indications, rather, of girlish bashfulness and of feelings that would be easily hurt. At their first meeting, Schiller recognized his "decorum and good behaviour"; and we can picture the youth, his slenderness enhanced by the severely black gown of a Protestant seminarist, gravely and thoughtfully pacing the cloisters. He looked like a musician, somewhat resembling young Mozart, of whom we have a picture at a corresponding age; and it is as a musician that his companions describe him.

"He played the violin; I have never forgotten the regularity of his features, the gentleness of his look, his tall stature, the neatness of his attire, and the unmistakable impression of sublimity which his whole appearance produced." We cannot think of these delicate lips as uttering a coarse word, of these enthusiastic eyes as revealing unclean lusts, of this reflective brow as harbouring base imaginings, but it is no less impossible to conceive of his

suavely aristocratic reserve melting into genuine cheerfulness. His fellow-students, indeed, speak of his reserve as passing due limits, to become self-suppression and even timidity. He took, they say, little or no part in their social life. Enough for him in the refectory to join with a few chosen comrades in the impassioned reading of the verses of Ossian, Klopstock, and Schiller, or to unburden his soul in music. Without being proud, he kept others at a distance; and when he left his cell to mingle with the rest of the students, it was "as if Apollo were striding through the hall." Even the uninspired author of the foregoing phrase, a pastor's son and himself subsequently a pastor, feels impelled to place Hölderlin among the gods and heroes of classical Greece.

Only for a moment, however, does the face thus shine forth in the radiance of a spiritual sunrise, a countenance divinely bright before the shadows of an unhappy fate have gathered thickly around it. In what should have been his prime, no likeness of the man was painted. There has been preserved for us an image of the eternal youth, who, indeed, never properly grew up. The other likeness dates from half a century later, to show the cavernous and shrivelled mask of a man in his second childhood. Meanwhile he had lived through the period of grey twilight, and we have no more than words to tell us how the halcyon sheen, the signs of radiant inspiration, began to fade.

The "good behaviour" of which Schiller speaks soon stiffened into compulsive neurosis, the shyness degenerated into misanthropy. Seated at the lower end of the table, shabbily clad as a tutor and deemed little better than a liveried servant, he had to acquire the humble demeanour of an underling. Anxious, distressed, with nothing more than impotent awareness of his own exceptional talent, he

lost the freedom of stride with which he had seemed to march over the hill-tops; and inwardly, likewise, his impetus died away, his mental balance was lost. He became suspicious and over-sensitive; "a casual phrase could wound him"; the ambiguity of his position was a misery to him; and mortified ambition, thrust back upon itself, drove a wedge deep into his breast. More and more he learned to veil his real self from the brutal glances of the intellectual mob he was compelled to serve, and by degrees it grew second nature to him to wear this mask of servility. At length, when he became definitely insane and all attempt to conceal his passions was abandoned, the internal conflict was distressingly revealed. The servility behind which the tutor had hidden the world of the inner man developed into a mania for self-humiliation. Thenceforward it was his way to greet strangers with unending obeisances, and to overload them with such reverential apostrophes as "Your Holiness!" "Your Excellency!" "Your Grace!" His face was weary and listless; the eyes that had flashed so brightly lost their sparkle, except when at times they were fired by the lightnings of the daimon into whose power he had fallen. In later days he seemed even to shrink in stature; he acquired a stoop—ill-omened symbol!—and hung his head as though it were too heavy to carry erect.

In the pencil sketch of Hölderlin at seventy, of the man "sold into slavery to the celestial powers," we see a wizened and toothless ancient leaning on a stick and groping his way. The other hand is solemnly upraised as he spouts verses into the void. Yet the harmony of feature defies the inward conflict, and the forehead is still nobly arched beneath the grey locks, in spite of the havoc wrought by age. With a shudder, none the less, did the old man's rare visitors contemplate the spectral visage of Scardanelli,

vainly endeavouring to trace the lineaments of that herald of fate who had excelled in the reverent depiction of the beauty and the menace of the heavenly powers. Those lineaments had vanished for ever. It was the wraith of Hölderlin that lingered for forty years on earth. The gods had long since recalled the poet to themselves in the likeness of an undying youth. Age could not wither the glory of his song.

THE POET'S MISSION

Those only believe in the divine
Who are themselves divine.

For Hölderlin, school had been a prison. When school days were over, it was in a restless mood, and full of anxiety and foreboding, that he came forth to face the world, his enemy. As far as objective knowledge was concerned, he had been amply instructed at the university of Tübingen. He was a master of three dead languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; with Hegel and Schelling, who had been his fellow-boarders, he had sedulously studied philosophy; and his diploma stated that he had not been idle in the acquirement of theological lore. "Studia theologica magno cum successo tractavit. Orationem sacram recte elaboratam decenter recitavit." He could doubtless have taken orders as a Protestant pastor, with fair prospects of obtaining an incumbency. His mother's dearest wish had, so far, been fulfilled. Her son was now fitted for a career either secular or clerical, for the occupancy of a pulpit or of a professorial chair.

But Hölderlin himself had no desire either for the one or for the other; he thought only of his mission as a revealer. At the university (to quote the florid wording of the diploma once more), as a "literarum elegantiarum assiduus cultor," he had written poems: at first elegiacs in imitation of the classics, then as a follower of Klopstock's lead, and finally composing, in Schiller's resounding rhythms, *Hymns to the Ideals of Mankind*. A novel, *Hy-*

perion, had also been tentatively begun. From these early days the enthusiast was resolutely directing his life towards the infinite, towards the rocks on which it was to be shattered. Nothing could prevent his obeying with self-destructive zeal this call from the unseen.

Hölderlin would hear of no compromise with the practical requirements of a means of livelihood; it would have been "unworthy" to build a bridge (however narrow) between the prose of an ordinary civic occupation and the sublimity of a divine calling:

> My mission is
> To celebrate higher things, and that is why
> God gave me speech and a grateful heart.

He was determined that the purity of his will should be unalloyed, that his essence should remain untainted. He did not want "troublous" reality, but set forth, like Shelley, in search of

> some world
> Where music and moonlight and feeling
> Are one;

where no compromises would be needed, no admixture with base elements; where the spirit could maintain itself aloof in its intrinsic brightness. In this inviolability, in this splendid contempt for real existence, there is manifest, even more than in any specific poem, Hölderlin's heroism. He knows when he sets out on such a quest that he is renouncing security, house and home and comfort; he knows how easy life would be for him "could he but be light-heartedly happy"; he knows that on the path he has chosen he is doomed "to be forever and a day cut off from joy." But he prefers the poet's uncertain lot to philistine safety. With his gaze directed upward, his soul steadfast in its earthly

tenement, heedless of the privations his body must suffer, he marches towards the invisible altar where he is to be both priest and victim.

This invincible resolution, this mystery of maintaining an absolute purity of purpose, this fixed decision that he would show unqualified devotion to life in its integrity, was the fundamental strength of a youth in other respects frail and unassuming. Hölderlin knew that the poet's goal, the infinite, could not be reached by one with divided heart and mind; that he who wished to reveal the divine must consecrate his own self, must sacrifice his very being, to the task. Hölderlin's conception of poesy was sacramental. The man with a poetic mission must offer up all that others receive from the world. If he is to be near the throne of grace, if he is to walk in the light of the divine, he must, as servant of the elements, live among them in sublime insecurity and ennobling danger. He must have unified his endeavours if he is to encounter the infinite; and unless his will is wholly directed towards his lofty aim, he will reach only the lower levels. At the outset Hölderlin recognized that unconditional devotion was essential. Before leaving the university he had made up his mind that he would not become a pastor or permanently bind himself to any secular career, would allow nothing to distract him from his supreme task as "guardian of the sacred flame." The road was hidden from him, but he had no doubt about the goal. Awake to the perils his weakness in face of the world exposed him to, but firm of purpose, he comforted himself with the reflexion:

> Are not all mortal men among thy kin?
> Has not Destiny consecrated thee to service?
> This being so, march onward,

Though weaponless, yet undismayed!
Whatever happens, give it thy blessing.

What befell Hölderlin was the outcome of this sense of consecration for a mission, of this determination to give himself wholly to the cause. The tragedy was that he had to begin his fight by waging it, not against his enemies, not against the rough world that he hated, but against those who were dearest to him and those who loved him best. His most formidable adversaries in his struggle to live life as poesy were his mother and his grandmother, his intimates, whose feelings he did not want to hurt, but whom sooner or later he was bound to disappoint. The heroic trends have no more dangerous opponents than those who mean well by the would-be hero, those whose hearts are filled with love for him, and who for that very reason urge him to avoid stresses, hoping that the "sacred fire" in him can be damped down so as to smoulder on the domestic hearth. Touching was the way in which, for a decade, Hölderlin ("suaviter in modo, fortiter in re") found one excuse after another for refusing to fulfil his kinsfolk's wish that he should become a clergyman. Subterfuge was necessary, for he would not avow the true reason—his assurance that he had a poet's vocation. He spoke of his verses as no more than "attempts at poetry," and he told his mother that he hoped one day to prove himself worthy of her affection. Never making much of his successes, he continued to describe himself as a beginner. "I am profoundly convinced that the cause to which I am devoted is a noble one, and that it will show itself useful to mankind as soon as I have cultivated it sufficiently and have found the right method of expression."

Naturally enough, all that his mother and his grand-

mother could see behind these diffident words was the hard fact that Johann Christian Friedrich, homeless and unemployed, was chasing phantoms through an empty world. Widows both, they had spent year after year in their narrow quarters at Nürtingen, stinting their expenditure on food and clothes and firing to provide the wherewithal for their darling boy's studies. With delight they read his respectful letters from school, they rejoiced in his good reports, and their hearts swelled with pride the first time some of his verses attained the honour of print. When the period of study was finished, they hoped that he would soon become a minister of religion, would wed a fair-haired maiden and settle down near at hand. Then, on Sundays, they would be able to hear him expound the word of God.

But Hölderlin knew that the dream would never be realized. The best he could hope for was not to awaken them too roughly. He was gentle, therefore, even in the emphasis with which he renounced the clerical career. Knowing that, much as they loved him, they were coming to regard him as a loafer, he tried to explain his mission, writing: "My leisure is not idleness, and it is far from my mind to aspire to an agreeable ease at others' cost." Again and again, he extolled the earnestness and morality of his vocation. "Believe me," he wrote respectfully to his mother, "that I do not think lightly of my relationship to you, and that I often put myself about a great deal in the endeavour to reconcile my scheme of life with your wishes." He tried to convince them that he was serving mankind as effectively as if he had been a pastor—knowing all the time that the attempt was vain. "It is not mere obstinacy that determines my present position. That position is determined by my character and my destiny, these being the only powers which no one can refuse to obey."

In spite of disappointment, the lonely old women stood by him. With a sigh they continued to send the unteachable young man their savings, to make him shirts and knit him socks—tears and sorrows being stitched or knitted into every garment. But as year followed year, and still (so it seemed to them) he shirked the essential duties of life while he wandered from place to place living upon casual engagements as tutor, they ventured once more to press their wishes upon him. They did not, so they declared, want to interfere with his poetical ambitions; but surely these ambitions were not incompatible with his taking orders? They seemed to be foreshadowing Mörike, a kindred spirit to Hölderlin, who in days to come was to be both Protestant pastor and lyric poet. But the intimation of this possibility was a challenge to Hölderlin's belief that priestly service could brook no rival. He proclaimed his inmost conviction with the pride of one unfurling a banner, writing to his mother: "Many, doubtless stronger than I am, have endeavoured to play a double role, to be a man of affairs or a man of learning and at the same time a poet. But always in the end such persons have been compelled to sacrifice one career to the other, and this has been disastrous . . . for if a man sacrifices his ordinary career he is playing others false, and if he sacrifices his art he sins against a mission imposed on him by God—a sin as great as or greater than if he should sin against his body."

Unshaken as was the poet's confidence in his mission, not even the most modest of successes came to reward it. Hölderlin was twenty-five, he was thirty, and, still without a home of his own, still a tutor feeding at others' tables, he must write like a schoolboy to thank his mother and his grandmother for the vests, the handkerchiefs, and the socks they sent him from time to time; must still put up with

their reproaches for the disappointment he had caused them. These reproaches were hard to bear, and he once wrote despairingly to his mother: "I do wish you were quit of me." Again and again, however, he had to knock at the only door which remained open to him in a hostile world, and again and again to implore their patience. At length he came back to their threshold as a wreck. His struggle for the ideal had cost him the life of the real.

Hölderlin's heroism is splendid because it is free from pride and devoid of confidence in victory. All he is aware of is his mission, the summons from the invisible world; he believes in his calling, but has no assurance of success. He is for ever vulnerable. Never did he feel, as Siegfried felt when winding the horn, that he was one on whose inviolable armour the shafts of fate would be splintered. It is the feeling that he is foredoomed to destruction, that a menacing shadow dogs his footsteps, which makes his persistence in his chosen course so courageous. The reader must not think that Hölderlin's faith in poesy as the profoundest meaning of life implies a like belief in his own poetic gifts. As regards these latter he remained humble-minded. Nothing was further from him than the virile, almost morbid self-confidence of Nietzsche, who chose as his motto: "Pauci mihi satis, unus mihi satis, nullus mihi satis." A chance word could discourage him; a word of criticism from Schiller could disturb him for months. When he was a schoolboy he admired such poetasters as Conz and Neuffer. Yet for all this personal modesty, for all this sensitiveness, he had a will of steel to animate his devotion to poesy, to fortify him for self-immolation. "My dear friend," he writes to one of his intimates, "when will people come to see that in our case the greatest force is the most modest in its manifestations, and that the divine message

(when it issues from us) is always uttered with humility and sadness?" His heroism was not that of the warrior, not the heroism of triumphant force; it was the heroism of the martyr who is ready, nay, glad, to suffer for the unseen, to perish on behalf of an ideal.

"Let it be as thou wilt, O Destiny!" With these words the unyielding poet bows in reverence before the doom he has brought upon himself. What higher form of heroism can there be than this, a heroism unstained with blood, untainted by the lust for power? The noblest courage is free from brutality, is not stubborn and pugnacious, but is an unarmed surrender to a necessity that is recognized as at once overwhelming and sacred.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POESY

Men did not teach it me.
A devout heart, fired by unfathomable love,
Drove me towards the infinite.

No other German poet had so overwhelming a faith as Hölderlin in poesy and its divine origin. He transferred to the concept of poesy his own unalloyed purity. Strange as it may seem, this Protestant theological student from Swabia had gone back to the world of classical Greece in his attitude towards the invisible powers, believing in "Father Ether" and the sway of the Parcæ far more fervently than did his contemporaries Novalis and Brentano in Christ. To him, poesy was what the Gospel was to them—the revelation of ultimate truth, the bread and the wine which brought the finite body of man into communion with the infinite and the eternal. For Goethe, poesy was no more than a fraction of life, whereas for Hölderlin it was the essential meaning of life; for the former it was a personal need, but for the latter it was a suprapersonal, a religious necessity. In poesy Hölderlin discerns with awe and veneration the divine afflatus which fertilizes and inspires the world, the one possible harmony wherein, for blessed moments, the eternal cleavage of being can be resolved and man's perpetual tensions loosened. Just as the invisible ether fills the interspace betwixt heaven and earth, so does poesy fill the abyss between the heights and the depths of the spirit, bridge the gulf that separates gods from men. Poesy (I must reiterate) was not for Hölderlin as it was for Goethe

a musical supplement to life, an adornment to the spirit of mankind; it was the central purpose and meaning of that spirit, the all-embracing formative principle. Consecration to the service of poesy was therefore the only life worthy to be lived. Unless we understand this outlook, we shall fail to grasp the magnitude of Hölderlin's heroism.

Unceasingly did he expound in his verses the significance, the "mythos," of the poet as thus conceived; and only by following in his footsteps shall we be able to discern the animating principle of his passionate sense of responsibility and the vigour of his demand for freedom from mundane ties. For him, with his faith in the "heavenly powers," the cosmos was dichotomized in the Greek, the Platonic, sense. Above "live the lords of heaven, rejoicing in the light." Below are we poor mortals working at the meaningless treadmill of our daily tasks:

Barred from the light of God's countenance, wandering, lives as in Hades
Our race, lost in the darkness. Here there is no one to help them,
Toiling each for himself, and each in the thunderous workshop
Hears but the clang of his own tools. Hard and unending the labour,
Wearily, mightily striving. Ceaseless, but ever and ever
Fruitless as that of the Furies, tending nowhither, their struggle.

As in Goethe's *Westöstliche Divan*, the world is cloven into night and light, until the dawn "takes pity on the torment," until a mediator between the two spheres comes upon the scene. The cosmos would remain twin solitudes—the loneliness of the gods and the loneliness of men—did there not arise between them a fugitive tie; did not the higher world mirror the lower, and the lower the higher. Even the gods on high, "moving in the blessed light," would not be happy were it not for these ties; their feel-

ings would be numb but for the stimulus of responsive human feeling:

As heroes garlands need, consecrate elements likewise
Need for their sustenance worship, a human heart's adoration.

The lower domain is drawn towards the higher, the higher towards the lower; spirit swings towards life, and life aspires to spirit; even imperishable nature is unmeaning until it gains mortal recognition, until it wins the love of earthly beings. The rose is not truly a rose unless it is present as such to human perception, the sunset is beautiful only when its glories are reproduced on the human retina. Just as man needs the divine to keep him from destruction, so does the divine need man for its own fulfilment. The gods therefore summon witnesses of their power, fashion the mouths that will sing their praises, create the poet thanks to whom they for the first time become truly gods.

This basic idea of Hölderlin's may (like all his poetic notions) be only borrowed. He takes it on loan from the "stupendous mind of Schiller." Yet how much more exalted is Hölderlin's conception! Schiller had written:

> Friendless was the world's great Master;
> Felt a need, and therefore made the spirits,
> Blessed mirrors of his blessedness.

Compare with this, Hölderlin's Orphic vision of the birth of the poets:

For voiceless and lonely,
Fruitless in his obscurity,
Despite all the signs and lightnings
And floods at his disposal,
Would have been our Heavenly Father,
And never would he have found true esteem among mortals,
But that the congregations can raise their hearts in song.

Thus whereas according to Schiller it is, so to say, to relieve his own tedium that the Divine Being creates the poet (Schiller still thinking of art as a sort of sublime diversion), according to Hölderlin the making of the poet is necessary to God, who is not divine but for the existence of the poet, becomes divine only through the poet's instrumentality. Fundamental in Hölderlin's scheme is the idea that poesy is indispensable to the world; nay, more, that it is not merely a creation within the cosmos, but itself creates the cosmos. Not simply to amuse themselves did the gods make the poet, but because they were constrained to do so; they needed him, "the envoy of the flowing word":

> Of their own immortality
> The gods have a surfeit. One thing
> The heavenly powers need above all,
> They need heroes and human beings
> And mortals in general. For, inasmuch as
> The blessed ones are themselves passionless,
> Another perforce—if the phrase be allowed—
> Must feel in the name of the gods.
> They need him.

They need him, the gods; and in like manner men need poets, the

> consecrated vessels
> Wherein the wine of life, the spirit
> Of the heroes, is stored.

In the poets the upper and the lower run together; they resolve discord into harmony, for

> The thoughts of the world-soul
> Silently ripen in the poet's heart.

Thus, simultaneously elect and accursed, the poet wanders between solitude and solitude, for he is begotten on

earth but permeated with the divine essence, his mission being to contemplate the divine in the plenitude of its divinity while revealing it to mortals in that earthly semblance which their eyes are capable of contemplating. He comes from the world of men, helped along his course by the gods. He is one of the resounding steps of "the stairway by which the sons of heaven descend to make themselves known to the children of men." Through the poet, dull-witted mortals win symbolical experience of the divine; as in the mystery of the chalice and the host, through his words they enjoy the body and the blood of infinity. Therefore does he wear (though they are invisible) priestly vestments, and he is vowed to inviolable purity.

This significance of the poet is the spiritual centre of Hölderlin's world. His writings breathe an invincible faith in the sacramental mission of poesy. This conviction is what gives his moral attitude its ceremonial solemnity. When, in any of his poems, he contemplates the divine, he loses all sense of personal participation, regarding himself as nothing but an emissary from heaven to earth. He who is "the voice of the gods," "the herald of the hero," or (as he says in another place) wants to be "the tongue of the people," needs the sublimity of speech, the elevation of conduct, the purity, of one whose mission it is to reveal God to man; he is speaking from the steps of an invisible temple to an invisible congregation, to a dream populace which is to arise out of the actual inhabitants of the everyday world—for "what endures is created by the poets." Since the gods are mute, the poet speaks in their name and in their spirit, the sculptor of the imperishable in a life where everything else is fleeting.

Hölderlin never lost the consciousness of his mission; but whereas in the first flush of youth he had been glori-

ously happy in his sense of election, as the years passed his mood became gloomier, more tragical, when the foreboding of a heroic destiny overwhelmed him. The youth had felt that a lofty position had been graciously vouchsafed him, but in maturer years he came to regard himself as doomed to suffer:

> Those who lend us the heavenly fire,
> The gods, bestow likewise the sacred gift of pain.

He knew that the sacerdocy of the poet implied the forfeiture of happiness. The chosen one was marked for grief, as a tree in the forest is marked with a red sign for the axe. Hyperion already hints at this, saying: "Cherish genius, and it will rend in sunder the ties of life"; but it is only as Empedocles that Hölderlin becomes fully aware of the curse the gods hold in store for those who "contemplate the divine in the plenitude of its divinity."

The poet is in perpetual danger because he is in close contact with the primal forces. He resembles the lightning-conductor, whose aspiring point receives the discharge of the infinite; for he, the mediator, must pass the heavenly message down enwrapped in song. Eternally alone, with a challenge he confronts the dangerous powers, and as the condensed fires pass on their way, the tension is almost insupportable. He may not refrain from transmitting the awakened flame, from uttering the prophetic message. Did he do so,

> He would himself be consumed,
> Would have turned against himself,
> For never will the heavenly fire
> Endure to be prisoned.

Yet he must not be fully outspoken. It would be a crime in the poet either to suppress the divine word or to be un-

restrained in the use of God's ineffable name. He must be ever searching for the divine, the heroic in man, and at the same time must recognize man's baseness without therefore despairing of his fellows; and he must sing the praises of the gods who have left him, their revealer, alone in his misery on earth. Both speech and silence are for him a sacred obligation. The initiates are sealed for their high calling.

Hölderlin, therefore, is fully conscious of the fate which awaits him. A decade before his tragical destiny is fulfilled, the shadow of coming destruction throws itself across his path. But Hölderlin, the pastor's grandson, like Nietzsche, the pastor's son, has the courage of Prometheus, nay, the longing of Prometheus to measure his strength against the infinite. He never tries, as Goethe tried, to dam, to exorcize, or to bridle the daimonic exuberance of his nature. Whereas Goethe was perpetually running away from his fate in order to save the invaluable treasure of life which had (he felt) been entrusted to his care, Hölderlin, the stout-hearted, faced the battle with no armour but his purity. At once fearless and pious, he uplifted his voice in a hymn to exhort the brethren and martyrs of poesy to keep alive their faith in the heroism of supreme responsibility, in the heroism of their mission:

> We must not disavow our nobility,
> The impulse within us to form
> The unformed after the fashion of the divine.

The reward, which is beyond price, must not be privily abated by pettiness of mood, by grudging the loss of trivial happiness. Poesy is a challenge to fate; it is piety and boldness conjoined. One who holds converse with heaven must

not be afraid of its lightnings or seek to evade an inexorable fate:

For it behooves us, poets, to stand firm
With heads uncovered 'mid God's storms.
The Father's radiance seize we in our hands,
Passing the heavenly message down
Enwrapped in song,
To the people, our brothers.
For pure-hearted are we,
Like children, innocent our hands,
The Father's radiance will not scorch them;
And, though profoundly moved,
Sharing in God's own pangs,
Our imperishable hearts are undismayed.

PHAETHON; OR ENTHUSIASM

Enthusiasm, we discover
In thine arms a blissful tomb,
Sinking, like a happy lover,
In thy waves, accepting doom.
Then with pride and courage burning,
When the signal calls to fight,
See us, like the stars, returning
Into life's swift-passing night.

For a mission so heroic as that which is assigned to the poet by Hölderlin, the young enthusiast had himself (why seek to deny it?) inadequate poetic gifts. At twenty-four he displayed no marked originality either intellectually or in craftsmanship. His first poems, even in respect of their imagery and their wording, recall only too obviously the masters he had studied at Tübingen—Klopstock's odes, Schiller's resonant hymns, the German version of Ossian. He is poverty-stricken as regards themes. Nothing but the juvenile ardour with which he reiterates them in numberless variations can blind us to the narrowness of his mental horizon. His fantasies run riot in a formless world. "The gods," "Parnassus," "home" are the perpetual topics of his visions; and there is a wearisome monotony in the recurrence of such epithets as "heavenly," "divine," etc. His ideas are undeveloped, borrowings from Schiller and the German philosophers; and only after he has been writing for a considerable time do flashes of wisdom begin to emerge —a seer's utterances, seemingly not the product of his own mind, but the mysterious breathings of the world-spirit. There is not even a trace of the most important elements of

style; we note the lack of material insight, humour, knowledge of human character, in a word, of mundane ingredients. Since Hölderlin repudiates contact with everyday life, his blindness to these matters is intensified until he seems to become an inhabitant of a dream world, a realm detached from the concrete. In his poems there is neither bread nor salt, shape nor hue; they are ethereal, translucent, imponderable; such stuff as clouds are made of, fugitive intimations, dubiously interpretable intuitions. Even his production is scanty, being restricted by nervous exhaustion and by accesses of melancholy. Compared with the primordial opulence of a Goethe, in whose poems the forces and juices of life find vigorous expression, who tills with powerful hand a fertile ploughland watered by refreshing rain and warmed by vivifying sunlight, Hölderlin's poetical output appears thin and poor. Perhaps never before or since in the records of German spiritual life was so great a poet fashioned out of such inadequate elements. His "material" (as one says of a singer) was insufficient. Everything depended upon his delivery. He was a weakling compared with other poets, yet his innate powers carried him with a rush into the upper world. His gifts had very little specific weight, but overwhelming impetus. In the last analysis his genius was not so much a matter of artistry as a miracle of purity. It was the expression of enthusiasm (I use the word in its primitive sense), of the hidden quality of inspiration.

That is why Hölderlin's talent is not culturally measurable in respect either of extent or richness; before all, this writer is a problem of intensity. In comparison with those others who are so powerfully developed, he appears frail and delicate. When contrasted with Goethe and Schiller, the knowledgeable and multifarious, the torrential and the strong, he seems weak and slender—as Francis of Assisi,

the gentle and ill-informed saint, seems when contrasted with such steadfast pillars of the medieval Church as Thomas Aquinas, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Loyola. Like St. Francis, he has angelic tenderness, a fervent sense of brotherhood with the elements, a non-militant enthusiasm, a sense of ecstasy which carries him far beyond the limits of his immediate environment. Like Francis he becomes an artist without art, solely through his faith in a higher world, through an act of self-sacrifice akin to that made by the young Francesco in the market-place of Assisi.

Thus it was not a fraction of his powers, a detached poetic gift, which made Hölderlin a poet, but his faculty for the ecstatic uplifting of his soul onto a higher level of being, his ability to get away from our familiar world, his capacity for merging himself in the infinite. Hölderlin is moved to write not by an impulse of the blood, the nerves, the senses, or by the happenings of personal experience, but by a surge of enthusiasm, a primary longing for unattainable altitudes. It cannot be said, in his case, that there is one particular motive which led him to become a poet, for he contemplates the whole universe poetically, and cognizes it poetically. The world shapes itself before him as an epic, so that unwittingly he is constrained to regard it in a heroic light—landscapes, men and women, currents of feeling. For him the ether is "Father" no less than for St. Francis the sun was "Brother." To Hölderlin as to the ancient Greeks the springs and the stones disclose themselves as breathing lips and captive melodies. Even the soberest, the most prosaic of things, when he touches upon them in his rhythmic words, becomes tinged with the essence of that mysterious Platonic world, becomes diaphanous, emits harmonies differing in wondrous ways from the speech of everyday life. There is a sheen upon his utterance

like the morning dew upon a meadow before it has been sullied by human footfall. Never before Hölderlin or after him in German literature was poetry inspired to such sublime flights, far above the levels at which we ordinarily move. Everything is seen as by a soaring eagle, from the heights to which Hölderlin so ardently aspires. That is why the beings he depicts appear, as in dreams, to have shaken off the trammels of gravity, to have become bodiless spirits—for Hölderlin never learned (this is at once his greatness and his limitation!) to see the world as it is. He poetized about it; never knew it.

Instead of reality, he had a sphere of his own, his true home. Unfailingly he strove upward:

> O melodies above me in the infinite,
> To you, to you, I rise.

Only through unceasing ascent could he find himself, and the self he sought existed in a nameless and visionary region far above that in which he lived his mortal life. We have early proof that this involved for him a dangerous condition of persistent internal tension. Schiller was prompt to notice, with blame rather than admiration, the violence of Hölderlin's emotions, deploring his lack of steadfastness and thoroughness. But for Hölderlin these "indefinable enthusiasms, when earthly life has ceased to exist, when time is dead, and when the unchained spirit becomes a god," these paroxysmal states of depersonalization, are fundamental. "In the eternal flux," he can be a poet only with the concentred energies of his spirit. When uninspired, he is the poorest, the most narrowly hemmed in, the gloomiest of mortals; but when inspired he is the most blissful and the most free.

His inspiration is eminently unsubstantial; he becomes

enthusiastic only when he is voicing enthusiasm. For him inspiration is simultaneously subject and object; is formless because, like a gas, it fills every container; has no boundaries because it emerges from and is reabsorbed into the eternal. Compared with Hölderlin's, Shelley's inspiration (although as lyric poet Shelley is so closely akin) seems earth-bound. For the latter, inspiration or enthusiasm is still connected with social ideals, with faith in human freedom, with an evolutionary progress in the material world. Hölderlin's enthusiasm exists apart from the world of men, becoming invisible, intangible, as it rises heavenward. In mortals it is felt as a sense of happiness, expressing itself through enjoyment of its existence, and enjoying itself inasmuch as it finds utterance. That is why Hölderlin is continually referring to the enthusiasm which inspires him, his poems being a perpetual adoration of productivity and a malediction upon sterility—since "the gods die when enthusiasm dies." For him poesy is inseparably linked with enthusiasm, just as inspiration can find vent only in song; that is why (this being in full accordance with his tenet that the poet is necessary to the world) poesy is the redeemer alike of the individual and of society at large. "O rain from heaven, O enthusiasm, thou wilt restore to us the springtime of the nations." His Hyperion is an enthusiast; and the revelation of his Empedocles is that of the immeasurable contrast between divine (productive) and earthly (worthless) feeling. The characteristics of his inspiration are plainly disclosed in *Empedocles*. The primal condition of productivity is the twilit feeling of contemplation, of reverie, wherein neither joy nor sorrow plays a part:

> The man whose needs are few,
> His world is all his own. In peace divine,

He walks among his flowers, mid soft airs
Which trouble not his mood of sweet content.

He is unconscious of his mundane environment; the force which sustains him, the force of inspiration, wells up from within:

For him the world is mute, and from himself
Alone springs inspiration, pleasure-tinged,
Until from out the night, made tense by joy,
There flashes, like a spark, creative thought.

The poetic impulse, therefore, is not the outcome of an experience, or of an idea, or of a volition; "for me," says Hölderlin, "inspiration, enthusiasm, surges spontaneously from myself." This spark is not generated by earthly collisions as fire is struck from flint by steel; it flames "unanticipated," is unconditioned by objective happenings:

In memorable hour
The unanticipated genius comes,
Divine creative spirit. Whereupon
With senses numbed we stand, and quaking limbs,
When struck by that effulgence from on high.

Inspiration is "effulgence from on high," Jove's lightning. Now Hölderlin goes on to describe his glorious sense of awakening, when his earthly memories are consumed in the fires of ecstasy:

He feels assured that he's
Of godlike elements composed. His joy
Is heavenly song.

The disintegration of the individual has been overcome; in the "heaven of mortals," unity of feeling has been attained.

To be at one with all, that is the life of the godhead,
That is the heaven of mortals,

says his Hyperion. In the fiery chariot Phaethon, the figure symbolizing his own life, has reached the stars, and can listen to the music of the spheres. It is in these moments of creative ecstasy that Hölderlin attains the culminating point of his existence.

But with this beatitude is mingled a premonition of the fall, a sense of imminent destruction. He knows that for mortals a sojourn in the realm of celestial fire, a vision of the mysteries, a partaking of nectar and ambrosia at the immortals' board, must be brief. He prophesies his own doom:

> Man cannot long endure the bountiful life of Parnassus,
> But if he has known it once, the vision lingers for ever.

The drive in the chariot of fire ends—as did Phaethon's—in being struck down by thunderbolts:

> For it seems
> That the gods mislike
> Our petulant prayers.

Now, therefore, the genius that has inspired him, hitherto bright and blissful, shows Hölderlin another countenance, the sinister visage of the daimon. Again and again the poet falls headlong back into life, falls, like his exemplar Phaethon, not into the familiar world of home, but to a deeper level, into an ocean of melancholy. Goethe, Schiller, and their congeners return from poesy as from a journey, as from a visit to another land, a little tired sometimes, but with a sound mind in a sound body. Hölderlin falls out of the poetic ecstasy like Lucifer falling from heaven, and, finding himself once more in the field of concrete fact, is wounded, crushed, an outcast. His awakening from enthusiasm is a spiritual death. After the crash, his excessive sensitiveness makes him find real life (as

ever before) dull and trivial. "The gods die when inspiration dies. Pan dies when Psyche dies." Waking life is not worth living; without ecstasy, all the uses of this world are stale, flat, and unprofitable.

Here, then, diametrically contrasted with his unparalleled capacity for exaltation, is the source of Hölderlin's melancholy. This is not the familiar pathological melancholia. Like his ecstasy, his melancholy is self-generated and self-nourished, being only to a minor extent determined by particular experiences, for we must not overestimate the importance of the Diotima episode. His gloom is a reaction from ecstasy, and is therefore necessarily unproductive. Whereas in the ecstatic state he is full of impetus and feels himself akin with the infinite, in the unproductive period of reaction he has once more become fully aware of his estrangement from life. He is like one of the rebel angels mourning for the lost paradise. He never tries to generalize and externalize this feeling into pessimism, as did Leopardi, Schopenhauer, and Byron. He expressly declares himself opposed to misanthropy. Pious to the core, he will not repudiate any part of the universe as unmeaning; but what he feels is that he himself is out of place in practical life. He can communicate with his fellows only in song, is unable to convey his meaning in ordinary conversation. Creative writing is, for him, essential to existence; poesy is his only refuge. Never did any accept more heartily than he the phrase "Veni creator spiritus," knowing that he could not create from within, as a voluntary act; for the creative spirit must come down to him from heaven like a rushing mighty wind. When ecstasy was lacking he was "as if struck blind," an aimless wanderer in a world the gods had forsaken. Life had become a heap of dross. In his sadness he could make no headway

against the world; when the melancholy mood was upon him he could utter no music. Poet of the morning glow, he was mute in the twilight.

Waiblinger, who was Hölderlin's closest intimate in the declining years when the poet's mind had become incurably disordered, called his friend Phaethon, in a novel. Phaethon, in the Hellenic mythology, was the handsome youth who drove up into the sky in the fiery chariot of song. The gods allowed him to draw near to Olympus, but then they pitilessly hurled him back into the dark abyss. Mortals who dare this approach to Parnassus are punished, crushed, stricken with blindness. Nevertheless, the gods love the desperate adventurers whom they thus destroy, love those mortals who burn with the fire of enthusiasm. In the end, Phaethon and his like have their names written among the stars.

SETTING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

Like seed-corn in a dead husk,
The hearts of mortals often lie asleep
Till the good hour strikes.

When he left school and university to set forth into the world, Hölderlin was like a man entering hostile country, knowing from the first his weaknesses and how fierce a struggle awaited him. While still rolling along in the post-chaise, he composed the ode entitled "Fate," the ode "to the Mother of Heroes, Iron Necessity." At the outset his intuitions prepared him for disaster.

Yet he was given an excellent start. No less a man than Schiller had recommended him to Charlotte von Kalb as tutor for her young son. In the thirty provinces of the Germany of those days it would have been hard for the enthusiast of twenty-four to find another house where poetic enthusiasm was held in such esteem, or where timidity and nervous susceptibility were so sympathetically regarded. Charlotte was herself a "misunderstood woman"; and since she was capable of entertaining a passion for Jean Paul, she could not fail to make all necessary allowances for the foibles of a sentimentalist. Major von Kalb gave him a friendly reception; his pupil took a fancy to him; the morning hours were at his own disposal for poetical composition; walks and rides in the neighbourhood brought him once more, after a long interval, into contact with the beauties of nature; while, in excursions to Weimar and Jena, Charlotte introduced him to the best circles and enabled him to

improve his acquaintanceship with Schiller and Goethe. Who can fail to admit that Hölderlin could not have been better off? He thought so himself, for a time. His first letters home brimmed over with satisfaction, and even with an unaccustomed cheerfulness. "I am getting fat, now that I am free from cares and vexations." He had begun his *Hyperion*, but his friends had gone out of their way to oblige him by showing some fragments of the poem to Schiller, and thus giving him a chance of publication. It seemed almost as if the young man were about to make himself at home in the world.

Ere long, however, the daimon was wrestling with him once more; he was seized by that "terrible spirit of unrest" which drove him "like the deluge, to the mountain peaks." Shadows of gloom and discontent crept into his letters. He began to complain of his "dependent position," and the forces at work within him soon became obvious. He could not endure regular occupation, could not bear to participate in the daily round of ordinary people. No existence other than that of a poet was acceptable. In this first crisis he probably failed to understand that the trouble sprang from the daimonism within him, from the jealous exclusiveness of the spirit that possessed him, making mundane relationships impossible. He still rationalized the immanent inflammability of his impulses by discovering objective causes for them. He spoke of his pupil's stubbornness, of defects in the lad's character which he, as tutor, was impotent to remedy. Hölderlin's incapacity to meet the demands of everyday life was in this matter all too plain. The boy of nine had a stronger will than the man of twenty-five. The tutor resigned his post. Charlotte von Kalb, who was anything but obtuse, grasped the underlying truth. Wishing to console Johann Christian Friedrich's

mother, she wrote to the latter: "His spirit cannot stoop to these petty labours . . . or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he takes them too much to heart."

Thus it was Hölderlin himself who spontaneously disrupted the possibilities life offered him. Utterly false, psychologically unsound, is the current assertion of sentimental biographers that, wherever he went, his employers thrust humiliations upon him, that at Waltershausen and at Frankfurt and in Switzerland he was degraded to the position of a servant. The truth is that everywhere and at all times things were made easy for him. But his skin was too thin, his sensibilities were too keen, "he took things too much to heart." To Hölderlin, as to all sensitives, applied what Stendhal wrote of himself in the image of Henri Brulard: "Ce qui ne fait qu'effleurer les autres me blesse jusqu'au sang." To him, reality was unfriendly, the world was brutal, dependence was slavery. In nothing but ecstasy could he find happiness. Outside this domain he scarcely breathed; in mortal air he was affected with a paroxysm of suffocation. "Why is it that I am as peaceable and good as a child when, undisturbed and in a leisurely way, I can pursue the most innocent of occupations?" he asks himself with amazement, alarmed by the conflicts that rage within him whenever he comes into touch with his fellows. He does not know that his unfitness for life is incurable. He still regards as chance happenings what are determined by the compulsion of the daimon; and he still believes that "freedom" and "poesy" link him to the world. He decides to venture upon an untrammelled existence; inspired with hope by the work he has begun, he makes the risky experiment of freedom. He accepts privation that he may enjoy the life of the spirit. In winter he passes his days in bed, for he can keep warmer there and save fuel; he has one

meal a day; he denies himself wine, beer, and the most modest pleasures. He goes to Jena only to attend Fichte's lectures, or sometimes by invitation he spends an hour with Schiller. For the rest, he whiles away his time in his bedroom—almost too dignified a name for the poky closet he inhabits. But his soul wanders in Hellas with Hyperion; and he might be styled happy were he not foredoomed to a perpetual recurrence of unrest.

A DANGEROUS ENCOUNTER

Ah, if only I had never entered your schools!

HYPERION

THE predominant factor in Hölderlin's determination to be free from the trammels of employment and dependence was his conception of the part the heroic should play in life, his resolve to seek "greatness." But before presuming to look for greatness in his own breast, he wanted to see "the great," the poets, the holy land of his dreams. It was not chance which made him betake himself to Weimar and Jena, for there he could bask in the radiance of Goethe and Schiller and Fichte, and of their brilliant satellites, Wieland, Herder, Jean Paul, the Schlegels—the starry host of the German intellectual firmament. Such was the atmosphere he desired to inhale, he to whom the prosaic was loathsome. Here he hoped to breathe the air of the classic world, to test his powers in this agora of the spirit.

But first he must prepare himself for the struggle. Contemplating Goethe's all-embracing insight, Schiller's "stupendous" power of abstraction, Hölderlin felt that he was culturally and intellectually inadequate. Succumbing to the perennial error of the Germans, he decided that he must "educate" himself systematically, must "attend" lectures on philosophy. Like Kleist a few years later, he did violence to the essential spontaneity of an aspiring temperament by strenuously endeavouring to find metaphysical lights for a heaven which did not exist for him apart from the "blessed world of feeling," by striving to buttress his

poetic edifice with doctrines. I doubt if any literary critic has hitherto been candid enough to admit how disastrously German creative writing was influenced by Kant, by the craze which German imaginative writers showed then and afterwards for metaphysics.

Although the conventional view among historians of literature is that a climax in German letters was attained through the speedy adoption of Kant's ideas by the imaginative writers of the day, it is assuredly time to shake ourselves free from this tradition, admitting frankly that the consequences of the invasion of belletristics by speculative dogma were unfortunate. Kant (I am expressing no more than a personal conviction, but one which I hold strongly) hampered the pure productivity of the classical epoch by dominating that epoch thanks to the constructive mastery of his notions. He did incalculable harm by misdirecting literary artists into the field of æsthetic criticism, thus making them less intelligible, less content with the world of experience, and interfering with the free exercise of imagination. Every writer who came under Kant's sway was less originally creative than he would otherwise have been. What else could be expected? The sage of Königsberg was all brain, all mind, a huge ice-block in whose circle of influence the fauna and flora of fantasy could not thrive. He never really lived in the flesh, having been depersonalized to become a thinking automaton; he never held a woman in his embrace, and never went beyond the immediate vicinity of the provincial town in which he had been born; for fifty, nay, for seventy years, every cog in every wheel of his machinery continued to circle upon its appointed path. How could so unnatural a creature, a man so unspontaneous, a thinker who had forced his mind to become rigidly systematized and the quintessence of whose

genius was this same fanatical constructivity—how, I say, could such as he ever enrich the work of the poet, the imaginative writer, the work of those whose activities are in need of perpetual stimulation from the realm of the senses and of incessant quickening by contact with the skirts of happy chance, of those whom passion drives ever and anon into the realm of the unconscious? Kant's influence took the swing out of the glorious impulses of our classicists (the primordial impulses they shared with the great artists and writers of the Renaissance), so that unwittingly they lapsed into a new humanism, into a professorial poesy.

How great was the loss to German letters when Schiller, the creator of the most vivid personalities ever staged by our writers, neglected his true vocation to amuse himself by subdividing poesy into categories, into the naïve and the sentimental; and when Goethe entered into a discussion with the Schlegels concerning classicism and romanticism. Without becoming fully aware of the fact, the writers of that epoch grew jejune through being infected by the excessive clarity of the *Critique of Pure Reason;* they lost warmth and colour in the cold rationalistic light that emanated from its excessively systematized, crystal-clear spirit, uncompromisingly dominated by the notion of the reign of law. At the time when Hölderlin came to Weimar, Schiller entered upon a phase of prosaic sobriety, having lost the fervour of his erstwhile inspiration; and Goethe (whose healthy disposition had always made him react with inborn enmity against metaphysical systematizations) was turning his attention almost exclusively to science. Their correspondence at this date shows the rationalist trend of their thoughts. Splendid documents, manifesting a wonderful understanding of the world and its problems, but much more an exchange of thoughts between two

philosophers or two professors of æsthetics than between two outstanding poets. When Hölderlin came into close contact with the Dioscuri, the mighty gravitational influence of Kant had drawn them away from the central regions of their being towards the periphery. A phase of classical humanism had opened—with this momentous difference from what had happened centuries before in Italy, that whereas Dante and Petrarch and Boccaccio had turned their backs on the dry learning of the day to take refuge in the realm of imaginative creation, Goethe and Schiller (during irrecoverable years) forsook poiesis in favour of the chill domains of æsthetics and science.

The result was that their disciples, the young men who sat at their feet and reverenced them as masters, fell a prey to the sinister fallacy that it was indispensable for them to be "cultured," to be "philosophically disciplined." Novalis's true element was the abstract world of poetic imaginings, and Kleist was a creature of impulse; to both of them the coldly intellectualized and concrete mentality of Kant was temperamentally antipathetic; but their foundations had been rendered unstable, and the resulting sense of insecurity made them seek safe footing in a region that was basically uncongenial. Even Hölderlin, the inspired being to whom logic was alien and to whom systematization was repugnant, this apostle of the absolute, this devotee of a world-spirit purged from the dross of intellectualism, forced himself into the screw-press of abstract concepts. He felt it incumbent upon him to talk the æsthetico-philosophical jargon of the day. His letters of the Jena period are turgid with shallow conceptual interpretations, with childish attempts to philosophize in a way that ran counter to his intuitions. For Hölderlin's mind was non-logical. His thoughts, though they often flashed like lightning out of

the heaven of genius, remained incapable of being wedded one with another, were magian utterances that must remain unlinked and could not be interwoven.

What he said of the "formative spirit,"

> Only what blossoms do I recognize,
> But never what it ponders,

was expressive of his own limitations. He could voice only the perception of becoming, give utterance to the dynamic; whereas the static, the schematic, the concept of being, eluded his grasp. Hölderlin's ideas are meteors; they are not ashlar from an earthly quarry, hewn stones to be built into a wall (every system is a wall). They arise in his mind without effort, ready to blaze forth into the sky; they do not need to be laboriously chiselled. What Goethe once said of Byron applies far more aptly to Hölderlin: "He is great only when he poetizes; when he reflects, he is a child." But this child is now diligently studying Fichte and Kant, gorging himself with doctrine to such an extent that Schiller utters a warning: "You will do better to shun philosophy, which is an ungrateful subject. . . . Keep closer to the world of the senses, and thus you will run less risk of losing yourself in abstractions." Hölderlin needed some time before he was able to recognize the danger of straying into the garden of logic. That sensitive barometer of his—declining productivity—showed him that he, who should soar heavenward, was being cribbed on earth in an atmosphere which dulled his perceptions. Thereupon he jettisoned systematic philosophy. "For long I failed to understand why the study of philosophy, which for most of those who devote themselves to it brings repose as the reward of diligence, robbed me of peace, and even made me more irritable the more I gave myself up to it. I have be-

come aware, at length, that I was turning away from my true bent."

A second and more perilous disappointment came from the poets. Heralds of superabundance had they seemed to him when glimpsed from afar, priests who would help them to uplift his heart to God. Intercourse with Goethe and Schiller would, he hoped, quicken his inspiration. Especially did he expect great things from a riper acquaintanceship with Schiller, over whose writings he had burned the midnight oil at Tübingen, and whose *Don Carlos* had been full of witchery for him in early youth. These great poets would give him, unsteady of purpose, the only thing that could transfigure life—enhanced power of winging his way towards the infinite. In this matter he was subject, of course, to the eternal fallacy which misleads the second and third generations in their attitude towards the masters. Young folk forget that while the works of the great remain, indeed, for ever young, though age cannot wither their perfections or time leave on them its mark, the poets themselves grow old. Schiller and Goethe and Herder had been created "councillors" of one sort or another, and Fichte was a professor; their work had become a familiar harness to them; they were anchored in life. Man is a forgetful creature, and perhaps there is nothing from which he becomes so readily estranged as from his own youth. Misunderstanding was thus rendered inevitable by the difference in years. Hölderlin looked for enthusiasm, but they recommended caution; he had expected their proximity to fan his flames, but they wanted to damp his ardour. He asked them to help him to achieve freedom and to foster his spiritual life; they were ready to aid him in finding a secure position in the world. He was eager for a tussle with fate, whereas they (in the kindness of their hearts) recom-

mended him to make peace on easy terms. He blew hot and they blew cold; the natural result was disagreement, notwithstanding spiritual kinship and emotional sympathy.

The first meeting with Goethe was symbolical. Calling on Schiller, Hölderlin had met a man well on in years who had, in an indifferent manner, asked him a question or two, to which the young poet had no less indifferently answered—to learn in the evening, with astonishment and alarm, that he had seen and spoken with Goethe. He had not recognized Goethe in the flesh, and was unable to recognize Goethe in the spirit—nor Goethe him, for during the remainder of Goethe's life (nearly four decades) except in his letters to Schiller the sage of Weimar never said a word about Hölderlin. The latter, too, was as exclusively attracted to Schiller as Kleist subsequently was to Goethe. Each of the less famous writers burned with affection for one only of the Dioscuri, and with the hasty judgment of youth held a poor opinion of the other. No less completely did Goethe misunderstand Hölderlin, writing to Schiller of the way in which Hölderlin's aspirations found expression in a "gentle self-satisfaction"; for Hölderlin was filled with divine discontent, and Goethe was damning him with faint praise when extolling him for "a certain grace, sincerity, and moderation." How unjust it was to describe the creator of the German pæan as "a minor poet"! Goethe's flair for the daimonic failed him in this instance, and for that reason he did not react against Hölderlin with the defensive vigour that was customary to him where the liegemen of the daimon were concerned. His attitude remained one of almost contemptuous good-humour. He passed by on the other side. So deeply was Hölderlin wounded by this aloofness that (preserving, even when his mind had failed, a remembrance of long-past sympathies and antipa-

thies) he showed fierce aversion in his declining years when a visitor happened to mention Goethe's name. He had suffered the same disillusionment as other German poets of that period, a disillusionment to which Grillparzer, though much more self-controlled than Hölderlin and less prone to wear his heart upon his sleeve, was at length to give frank utterance: "Goethe turned from poesy to science, and, in a magnificent quietism, devoted himself to the exclusive furtherance of the moderate and the ineffective, whereas in me the torches of fantasy were blazing." Even the wisest of men was not so wise as to understand, when age came upon him, that youth spells exuberance.

Thus there was no organic tie in Hölderlin's relationship to Goethe. That relationship would have become dangerous to the former if he had followed Goethe's advice and if he had consented to aim no higher than the idyllic and the bucolic. His resistance to Goethe's promptings amounted to a natural desire for self-preservation. But where Schiller was concerned his reaction involved the depths of his being, and held tragical implications. There the devotee had to assert himself against the object of devotion, the pupil against the teacher, the creature against the creator. Hölderlin's veneration for Schiller was fundamental. His world seemed likely to be laid in ruins because of his sensitiveness to Schiller's attitude, which was lukewarm and critical, though kindly; and Hölderlin's reaction was one of loving self-defence, a painful severance, resembling Nietzsche's breach with Wagner. In this instance, likewise, the pupil asserted himself against the teacher, regarding faithfulness to his ideal as more important than fealty to his chief. Hölderlin was in fact more loyal to Schiller than was Schiller himself!

For during these years Schiller was still master of crea-

tive energy, was still capable of utterances that went straight to the heart of the German nation; but he was an invalid, older than Goethe though not in years, and had earlier lost the fire of the senses and succumbed to the chill of intellectualism. Not that Schiller's enthusiasm had been dissipated, but it had moved from the concrete to the abstract plane. The rebellious fervour of the young man who had declared war against tyrants had crystallized into a *Methodik des Idealismus*. Fire of the soul had become fire of the tongue; faith had declined to optimism, which needed but little further change to become "practically useful" like German liberalism. Schiller now had his experiences only in the realm of mind, having lost the power of enjoying that "indivisibility" which Hölderlin demanded, the capacity for an integral perception of all that life had to offer. Strange, indeed, must it have seemed to Schiller when for the first time he saw Hölderlin in the flesh. Hölderlin had been Schiller's creation. Not merely did Hölderlin owe to Schiller the form of his verses and his mental trend, but for years Hölderlin's thought-process had been nourished exclusively upon Schiller's ideas, upon Schiller's belief in human progress. Hölderlin was almost as much a product of Schiller's mind as Marquis Posa and Max Piccolomini. Thus Schiller could see in Hölderlin his own fervour, his own word made flesh. Everything that Schiller asked of youth—enthusiasm, purity, exuberance—was embodied in Hölderlin, who was actually living the idealism which for Schiller was now a rhetorical flourish. Hölderlin had a genuinely religious and not a merely poetical faith in the gods and in Hellas, which for Schiller had long ere this become no more than allegories; he fulfilled the poet's mission, which for Schiller was only a cordial postulate.

That was why Schiller was startled by the discovery of Hölderlin, by the sight of his own creation. He promptly understood the situation, writing to Goethe: "I found in these poems much of myself, and it is not the first time that their author has put me in mind of my own aspirations." He was stirred at sight of the outwardly humble but inwardly self-assertive Hölderlin, stirred by the visions which had fired him as a young man. But to the maturer poet this volcanic energy and surging enthusiasm (though he continued their theoretical propaganda) seemed hazardous in everyday life. Schiller could not approve in the flesh-and-blood Hölderlin what he had acclaimed in the realm of poesy. In actual life it was unfitting to stake all on one throw of the dice, and Schiller therefore repudiated as non-viable the child of his own brain, himself redivivus. He saw that the idealism he expected of German youth was in place only in the world of tragic drama, whereas here and now, in Weimar and Jena, poetical absolutism would be fatal to any young man who should wantonly disregard conventional standards.

"He suffers from an excessive subjectivity; and his condition is dangerous, for such temperaments are impracticable." Thus wrote Schiller of Hölderlin, whose "enthusiasm" made him "an abstruse phenomenon"—much as Goethe spoke of Kleist as "pathological." Both the elder poets were quick to perceive the seismic struggles of the daimon, the explosive tensions of the superheated and prisoned inner personality. In real life, therefore, Schiller endeavoured in the kindliest fashion to bit and bridle Hölderlin. At the same time, in the most fatherly way, he did what he could to be useful, recommending the young man for tutorial posts, making interest with publishers, and so on. Furthermore, to wean Hölderlin from excesses, "to

make him reasonable," Schiller gently but firmly repressed his aspirations—without grasping for a moment that he was dealing with one to whom the most trifling rebuff seemed a smashing blow.

The outcome was that their mutual relations changed for the worse. Schiller's penetrating insight made him detect the axe of self-destruction looming over Hölderlin's head. Hölderlin felt that Schiller, "the only man to whom I have voluntarily surrendered . . . the only man upon whom I am inevitably dependent," though eager to give him "practical" help, had no understanding of his inmost being. He had hoped to be uplifted and strengthened. "A friendly word from a valiant man's heart is like a spiritual water which wells up out of the depths of the mountains and conveys to us, in its crystal drops, the hidden forces of the earth," says Hyperion. But neither from Goethe nor from Schiller did Hölderlin get any such bountiful encouragement. By degrees it became a torment for him to visit Schiller. "Continually I want to see you; and yet whenever I do see you it is only to feel that I can never be anything to you." At length he gave even franker expression to his sense of disharmony: "I must acknowledge that I am sometimes privily at war with your genius in order to safeguard my freedom." He recognized that he must not disclose the depths of his nature to one who found fault with his poems, one who repressed his exuberance, one who wanted him to be petty and tepid instead of "subjectivist and overwrought." Proud for all his humility, he concealed from Schiller the most vital of his poems; for a Hölderlin cannot defend himself, he can but bow his head and hide. To the last he abased himself, remained on his knees before the gods of his youth, never ceasing to pay homage to those who had first enchanted him and had

taught him to raise his voice in song. Schiller tossed the suppliant a pleasant word now and again, while Goethe passed him by with indifference. But neither of them would raise him from his knees, though his back were breaking.

Thus the meeting with the great ones, the encounter he had longed for, proved unfortunate; and the year of freedom in Weimar, during which he had fancied he would be able to perfect his work, was almost fruitless. Philosophy, the "hospital for unsuccessful poets," gave him no help; *Hyperion* was still no more than a fragment, the drama he had planned was unfinished, and (despite his thrift) his financial resources were exhausted. He had, so it seemed, lost the first round of the fight for existence as a poet, now that once more he was a burden on his mother, and had to gulp down secret reproaches with every mouthful of bread. Yet the truth was that in Weimar he had outfought the greatest danger that threatened: he had victoriously clung to the "indivisibility of enthusiasm"; he had successfully rejected his well-meaning elders' gospel of moderation. His genius had preserved its essence. Counsels of prudence notwithstanding, the daimon had kept alive in him an instinct that would not yield to the teachings of experience. His answer to Schiller's and Goethe's attempts to inculcate the golden mean, to make him restrict his energies to the idyllic and bucolic fields, was a wilder outburst than ever. In "Euphorion," Goethe had commended moderation upon poesy: "Be not foolhardy, lest disaster overwhelm thee. . . . For the sake of thy parents, control intemperate and violent impulses, quietly and peacefully cultivating thy field." An exhortation to quietism! Advice to poets to content themselves with the idyllic vein! Hölderlin passionately rejoined:

What solace good repute when the chain galls me,
When, surfeited with fame, my soul burns with desire?
Weaklings! I thrive, I thrive, only where struggle calls me!
Why would you rob me of my elemental fire?

This "elemental fire," in which Hölderlin's soul flourished like the fabled salamander in flame, resisted the chilling influences of the German classical poets. For the second time he who throve only where struggle called him, hurled himself back into life, in search of "that smithy where none but the noble metals are forged."

DIOTIMA

Fate pulls even the weakest out of themselves.

Madame de Staël writes in her diary: "Francfort est une très jolie ville; on y dîne parfaitement bien, tout le monde parle le français et s'appelle Gontard." The unsuccessful poet had been engaged by one of these Gontard families as tutor to a boy of eight. Here, as at Waltershausen, to the young enthusiast everyone at first seemed "very agreeable and, indeed, altogether exceptional," even though the zest with which he had set forth into life had vanished. In a letter to Neuffer he wrote: "I am like a flowering plant which, in its shattered pot, has been flung away into the street; its shoots have been broken off and its rootlets have been injured; then someone has taken the trouble to rescue it, has planted it out in fresh soil, and (with great labour and pains) has been able to save it from destruction." Hölderlin knew that because of his sensitiveness he could flourish only in a poetical atmosphere—in the Hellas of his dreams. It was not this or that specific manifestation of reality, not this or that house in particular, not Waltershausen or Frankfurt or Hauptwil, which wrought the mischief. Enough that they were reality, harsh reality, for them to be a distressing environment. "The world is too brutal for me," said Hölderlin's spiritual brother Keats. These tender plants wilt in any but poetical surroundings.

It was inevitable, therefore, that his affections should centre upon the one person in the new circle who, even on

close acquaintanceship, could still be imaginatively regarded as an emissary from that "other world" for which he craved—upon his pupil's mother, Susette Gontard, "Diotima." In the marble bust which has come down to us we do, indeed, discern a Hellenic purity of line; and it was as a Hellene that Hölderlin contemplated her from the first. "Is not she really and truly a woman of ancient Greece?" he whispered to Hegel when the latter came to visit him in Frankfurt. She seemed to him to have been born in the realm to which he himself belonged, another world than ours; to be a stranger here below, sick with longing, even as he was sick with longing to escape from the unsympathetic inhabitants of this sublunary sphere:

> Silent thou art and patient, for they understand thee not,
> O noble being. However bright the sun,
> Downcast thy eyes and mute thy lips,
> Since vainly seekst thou here thy true companions,
> Tender of heart like thee. Not here can they be found.

His employer's wife is for the tutor an angel strayed from the heavenly world to which he, too, rightly belongs. No sensual thought of bodily possession mingles with this feeling of intimate spiritual kinship. Just as Goethe had written to Charlotte von Stein:

> Surely in some long-forgotten epoch
> You my sister were, if not my wife,

so does Hölderlin acclaim Diotima, as one whose return he has eagerly awaited, as the woman who must have been his sister in some earlier metempsychosis:

> Long ago your hand I've taken,
> Sister by old ties of kin!
> You and I now reawaken,
> Diotima, spirits twin!

For the first time he discovers in this fragmented, marred world of ours the fellow-being of whom he has been in search, who can be "one and all" to him. In her, charm and sublimity and repose and spirit and disposition and body are intertwined to form a gracious unity. For the first time, now, in one of his letters, there resounds the word "happiness." He writes: "I am still as happy as in the first moment when we met. Unendingly delightful, unspeakably sacred, is my friendship with one who has strayed into this impoverished, despiritualized, unorderly century of ours. My sense of beauty can no longer err, for henceforward it will be unfailingly directed towards this Madonna. My reason schools itself by her instruction; and day by day my unco-ordinated temperament is soothed and cheered in the peace and contentment she radiates."

That is the overwhelming attraction of Diotima for Hölderlin—her repose. She gives him calm. Ecstatic being that he is, he does not need to be inspired with ardour. What will bring happiness to him who is perpetually aflame is relief from tension, the boon of rest. She can give him the great gift of moderation. She can do what neither Schiller nor his mother nor anyone else had ever yet been able to do for Hölderlin—tame "the mysterious spirit of unrest by melody." Reading between the lines of *Hyperion* we divine her maternal tenderness, and we see her inducing the storm-tossed youth to come to terms with life. "With advice and friendly exhortations she was continually endeavouring to make me orderly and cheerful, gently reproving me for the untidiness of my hair and the shabbiness of my clothes, chiding me because I bit my nails." This young man who is in charge of her own little boy must himself be treated like a froward child; but she managed him so tactfully, so restfully, that Hölderlin

found the training blissful. "You know how it was with me," he wrote to his most intimate friend. "You know how I lived without faith, how I had become chary of affection and was therefore utterly miserable. Could I be, as I now am, happy as an eagle, had not this revelation come to me?" The world was for him purer, more holy, now that the discordant outcry of his terrible loneliness had been resolved into a harmony.

> Is not my heart sanctified, more beautiful my life,
> Now that I love?

For a brief season the cloud of melancholy was lifted, and fate no longer frowned. This once, transiently, his life itself became a poem, his condition was one of joyful suspense.

But the daimon within him, "terrible unrest," did not slumber:

> The blossom of peace,
> So frail a flower, withers all too soon.

Hölderlin is of those who cannot bide long in one place. Even love "soothes him only to make him more savage in the end," as Diotima says of Hyperion (who is made in the image of the author). His intuitions are unrivalled; and though he does not yet "know" in the sense of full awareness, he has a mysterious foreknowledge of the disaster that awaits him, as an outcrop from within. He recognizes that Hyperion and Diotima cannot continue to live in peaceful companionship, "as happy as a loving pair of swans"; and in his "Apology" there is plain avowal of the black cloud of discontent that is gathering in his mind:

> Sacred being, often have I troubled
> Thy golden repose; and it is through me

That thou hast learned so many
Of the worst pangs life can bring!

The "wonderful yearning for the abyss," the mysterious attraction which his own depths have for him, is gradually increasing; and by degrees he becomes affected with a febrile but still unconscious dissatisfaction. More and more does his daily environment seem overshadowed. Then, like lightning out of the massed clouds, comes in a letter the phrase: "I am rent in sunder by love and hate." He is revolted by the luxurious ease of the house, which affects those who live in it and visit it "as new wine goes to a peasant's head"; his irritated sensibilities lead him to imagine affronts where none have been intended; and at length there is an outburst. The details are obscure. We do not know whether Diotima's husband (to whom the lady's literary tastes and occupations were uncongenial) had merely shown jealousy or had actually been violent. This much is certain, that something happened by which Hölderlin was deeply wounded, and that agonized verses streamed from him like blood:

Should I die of shame, should my soul
Fail to take vengeance on the miscreant,
Should I, overcome by the foes of genius,
Sink into a coward's tomb—
Then forget me, nor strive, kindly heart,
To rescue my name from oblivion.

But he did not rally his forces. There was no virile reaction. He allowed himself to be driven out of the house like a detected thief, and was content from Homburg to arrange for stolen meetings with his Diotima. Hölderlin's behaviour in this decisive hour was boyishly weak. He wrote his beloved fervent epistles, described her in florid language as Hyperion's splendid bride, covered page upon page with

the most fantastic hyperboles of passion; but he made no attempt, as would have a bold lover, to carry off his mistress. He did not, like Schelling and like Schlegel, careless of scandal and indifferent to danger, drag his darling from the detested nuptial couch, remove her from a chill marriage, to warm her life at the fires of his own. He could only bow his head and say: "the world is too brutal for me." We should have to stigmatize this failure to arm himself for the fight as poltroonery, were it not that his meekness was underlain by pride and a quiet strength. For this most vulnerable of mortals felt assured that within him was something imperishable, unassailable, immune to the onslaughts of the world. "Freedom—the word has a profound significance for one who can truly understand it. The trouble has cut so deep, I have been so incredibly mortified, am without hope or purpose, overwhelmed with shame—and yet there remains a power within me, something incoercible, which sends a delicious thrill through me whenever it stirs." Therein lies Hölderlin's secret. For all the weakness of his body, the neurasthenic frame is sustained by steadfastness of soul, by the inviolability of a god. For this reason, in the end, no earthly power can master the powerless poet. Mundane experiences pass like fleeting clouds at dawn or sunset across the untroubled mirror of his soul. Nothing that he encounters can enter into absolute possession of him. Even Susette Gontard is, after all, no more than his vision of a Grecian Madonna, and fades like a dream to become a yearning reminiscence.

Neither possession nor loss touches his innermost life; that is why the genius remains invulnerable, however sensitive the man. One who can bear to lose everything, gains everything, and grief therefore stimulates his creative energy. "The more unfathomable a man's suffering, the more

immeasurable his might." It is now, when he has been wounded to the quick, "when his soul has been humiliated," that he discloses his utmost strength, the "poet's courage" which scorns to use defensive weapons, and, thus unarmed, he defies fate:

> Art thou not kinsman of all that lives?
> Do not the Parcæ nourish thee for their service?
> March therefore weaponless
> Onward through life, undismayed
> Whate'er may hap, and blessing all that comes.

Poverty and injustice, man-inflicted, have no power against the man in Hölderlin. But the fate meted out to him by the gods fosters the genius of Hölderlin the poet.

THE NIGHTINGALE SINGS IN THE DARK

The heart's waves would not foam so splendidly or rise so high as soaring spirit, were it not that destiny, the mute old rock, obstructs their course.

It may well have been in some such tragical hour when he was able to enjoy the bliss of solitary poetical creation that Hölderlin penned the wonderful lines: "Never before had I had so rich an experience of how true was the ancient saw which maintains that the heart is stirred with a new blessedness when it is able to remain steadfast even in the midnight of supreme affliction; and that it is in the course of the utmost sorrow that the life-song of the world first sounds in us divinely, like the song of a nightingale in the dark." At this juncture what had been no more than the intuitive melancholy of youth hardened in him to become tragical grief, and his elegiac mood found worthy poetical expression. The stars that had guided his footsteps, Schiller and Diotima, had vanished from the sky. He was alone in the darkness when he uplifted his voice in that "Nightingale's Song" which will live as long as a word of the German tongue endures. At length Hölderlin had been "hardened through and through, and consecrated." The work done by this solitary while he was on the steep divide between ecstasy and the collapse of his mind bears the unmistakable stamp of genius. The husks that veiled his glowing core have been shed. The primordial melody of his being flows forth in matchless rhythms. This is the period of his great

trilogy: the finest poems, the novel *Hyperion,* and the tragic *Death of Empedocles*—three variations upon the theme of his own rise and fall. Thus it is amid the ruins of his career that Hölderlin voices the most exalted spiritual harmonies.

"One who treads on his sorrow, treads upward to higher spheres," says his Hyperion. Hölderlin has taken the decisive step. Henceforward he stands above his own life, above his personal sorrows; he is no longer a prowling sentimentalist, but one who has become fully aware of his destiny. He resembles Empedocles on Mount Etna; below him are the voices of men, above him are eternal melodies, in front of him is the fiery crater. He is thus gloriously alone. His ideals have drifted away like clouds; even Diotima's image looms obscurely as if from dreamland. Mightier visions claim his attention. With prophetic insight, he reveals his message in rolling rhythms. Only one care remains: he is afraid he may succumb prematurely, before he has sung the great pæan, the chant of victory. Once more, therefore, he prostrates himself in front of the invisible altar, to pray for a hero's end, for death while he is in the article of song:

> One summer do but grant, ye Mighty Powers,
> And but one autumn, for my ripest song,
> That willingly my heart, sated
> With joy, may cease its pulsing.
>
> The soul of him whose inborn heavenly rights
> Life has denied can find no rest below;
> Yet once, at least, on me, to whom poesy
> Is sacred, let the Muses smile.
>
> Then gladly shall I join the peaceful shades,
> Content, at last, to lay my lyre down.

No more I'll need it, since for a season brief
I've scaled Olympian heights.

It is, indeed, only for a brief season that the Silent Sisters concede him the privilege of using his lyre to good effect. In this matter Clotho is spinning him a short thread, and Atropos is ready to use the shears. But meanwhile he "scales Olympian heights," merges himself in the infinite. *Hyperion*, *Empedocles*, and the poems remain as witnesses, a magnificent triad. Yet they, too, are fragments when he falls headlong into the abyss.

"HYPERION"

Do you know what you are lamenting? It is not something that vanished years ago. We cannot say in so many words when it came and when it went. It has been and it is—in you. You are in search of a better time, a more beautiful world.

DIOTIMA TO HYPERION

HYPERION is Hölderlin's youthful dream of the other world, of the invisible home of the gods, the cherished dream from which he never fully awakened to the realities of life. "I have always premonitions, but I cannot find what I seek," we read in the first fragment of the novel. Barren of experience, lacking knowledge of the world, ignorant even of artistic forms, this master of intuition begins to write about life before he has made life's acquaintance. Like all the novels of the romantic school—like Heinse's *Ardinghello*, Tieck's *Sternbald*, Novalis's *Ofterdingen*—his *Hyperion* is anticipatory to experience, is dream, is poesy, depicting a flight into the world of imagination instead of a contact with the world of fact. The younger German idealists were at the turn of the century running away from reality; whereas on the other side of the Rhine their French brethren, who were likewise disciples of Rousseau, were interpreting the master more successfully. In France, people were no longer content to go on dreaming of a better world. Robespierre tore up his poems, Marat his sentimental novels, Desmoulins his verses, Napoleon the story he had penned in imitation of *Werther;* and in their several ways they attempted to remould the world nearer to their

heart's desire. The Germans, on the other hand, continued to luxuriate in prophetic fantasies. They gave the name of "romance" to something that was in part a record of their dreams and in part a diary of their sensibilities. They let their dreams run riot until the dreamers were exhausted by a sort of spiritual orgasm. The triumph of Jean Paul signified the climax and marked the commencing decline of the novel in which sentimentality was pushed to an extreme, which was perhaps music rather than poesy—was a fantasia upon the strings of tensed feeling, a passionate participation in the world-melody.

Of all these soul-stirring, pure, and divinely boyish romances, Hölderlin's *Hyperion* was the purest, the most soul-stirring, and also the most boyish. It had the futility of the childlike enthusiast and the rushing impetus of genius; it was impracticable to the pitch of absurdity, and was none the less impressive because of its bold inroad into a boundless realm. Its faults, failures, and immaturities are too numerous to be listed. Since there is now a tendency to idolize Hölderlin—his worshippers (like those who idolize Goethe) being apt to bow in reverence before his defects as well as his merits—we must have the courage to admit that the book was foredoomed to be in many respects ineffective owing to the inherent characteristics of the author's genius. It does not, and it could not, deal with the lives of real flesh-and-blood individuals. Hölderlin's estrangement from human kind made him temperamentally unfit for creative psychology.

He had clairvoyantly written:

> Neither myself do I know, nor yet the life of my fellows.

All the same here he was, in *Hyperion*, attempting the impossible. He who had never drawn near to human beings

now tried to chisel their features; to describe war, of which he knew nothing; Greece, a country he had never visited; and a time (the present) he had sedulously ignored. The consequence was that he was compelled to borrow unconsciously from others' books in order to get his setting. The names were simply "lifted" from other novels, the landscapes were filched from Richard Chandler's *Travels in Greece*, the situations and the characters were clumsy imitations of those in contemporary works, the narrative was plagiary, the epistolary form was kidnapped, the philosophy was little more than a fanciful reproduction of writings and conversations. Let us face the facts: nothing in *Hyperion* is Hölderlin's own except (the exceptions are fundamental) the torrential inspiration and the soaring rhythm of the diction with its surge towards the infinite. It is as music, in the widest sense of the term, rather than as a novel that this book must be classed.

Thus as far as original notions are concerned, the thought-content of *Hyperion* can be compressed into a nutshell. Only one idea emerges from the lyrical sublimity of the resounding words; and (as always with Hölderlin) even then it is more of a feeling than an idea, being his dominant conviction that the external, commonplace, miscellaneous, and valueless world of everyday experience can have nothing in common with the serene world of inner experience. He is a dualist about life, which is for him vitiated by inherent disharmony. The idealist aim of the individual and the world must be to combine the internal and the external into a supreme form of unity and purity, to establish on earth the "theocracy of the beautiful," the ἓν καὶ πᾶν, the one-and-all. "Holy nature, thou art the same within us and without. Surely, then, it cannot be so hard to unite what is outside me with the divine that is within?"

Such is the sublime religion of unification cherished by the youthful enthusiast Hyperion. He is inspired, not by the cold will of Schelling, which is little more than a verbal formulation, but by the ardent will of Shelley, who craves for an elemental union with nature; or, let us say, by Novalis's yearning to break the thin membrane that separates the world from the ego, in order to flow voluptuously into nature's warm body. In this poet's craving for the all-embracing unity of life and the all-embracing purity of the spirit, the only original elements contributed by Hölderlin are his mythological conception that once upon a time there was a golden age when such a condition existed as a primal fact, in an Arcady where the inhabitants were sublimely unaware of it; and his religious faith that the golden age will return. What the gods once gave and the ignorant foolishly gambled away, the striving spirit will re-create in centuries of arduous toil. The nations set out from the harmony of their childhood to stray into their present discords; and with the re-establishment of harmony, a maturer harmony, the world's great age will begin anew, the golden years will return. "Beauty will be universalized, man and nature becoming merged in the godhead." For (Hölderlin here makes a remarkable suggestion) man can dream nothing which has not at one time or another been a reality. "An ideal is something which once existed as a part of nature." In the halcyon days of the past, the world must have been what we would fain make it now. Furthermore, inasmuch as we long to refashion it in accordance with the old model, power will be granted us to do so. We must make a new Hellas beside the Hellas of history—a Hellas of the spirit. Hölderlin, its noblest champion among the Germans, creates it for us in the world of the imagination. This is to be our universal home.

Hölderlin's youthful emissary goes hither and thither in search of his "lovelier world." Hyperion, Hölderlin's double, discovered his ideal in nature's universal embrace; but nature could not cure the innate melancholy of the seeker, for nature, being integral, eluded his severed sensibilities. Then he tried to find a durable tie in friendship; but this, too, proved inadequate. Next, love seemed to offer the blissful unification; but Diotima vanished from his life, and the dream ended almost before it had begun. Perhaps heroism, the struggle for freedom, would serve his turn; but this ideal likewise was shattered on the rocks of reality, the fight being debased into ravin and slaughter. The pilgrim, therefore, returned to the original home of his gods —only to discover that Greece was no longer Hellas, for an unbelieving generation had desecrated the ancient shrines. Nowhere could Hyperion discern completeness or harmony. It was his doom, he felt, to have entered the world too soon or too late, when the times were out of joint. Terra was disillusioned and dismembered.

> For the sun of the spirit, the lovelier world, has evanished,
> And in the frostbitten night hurricanes wrathfully roar.

His uncontrollable anger drives him back to Germany, where he finds men and women still under the curse of separateness, specialization; a life far from being integral. Thereupon he uplifts his voice in admonition. It is as if the seer had visioned the perils threatening the West: Americanism, mechanization, the despiritualization of the coming century to which he had looked forward in the hope that it would establish the "theocracy of the beautiful."

> Toiling each for himself, and each in the thunderous workship
> Hears but the clang of his own tools . . .

. . . ceaseless, but ever and ever
Fruitless as that of the furies, tending nowhither, their struggle.

Hölderlin's detachment from the present develops into a declaration of war upon the epoch, upon his homeland, when he perceives that not there is his new Hellas, the "Germania" of his dreams, to be found; and consequently, though he is so ardent a believer, he utters a malediction harsher than any words which a German inspired by frustrated affection had ever before used of his own people. He, who had set forth into the world as a seeker, flees in his disappointment to the world beyond, returns to the realm of ideology. "I have finished my dream, the dream of man and his doings." But where does Hyperion find a place of refuge? The novel does not answer this question. In *Wilhelm Meister* and in *Faust*, Goethe answered: "In activity." Novalis declared that it was in the land of fable, of magical reverie. Hyperion could only ask; he could not answer. "He had intimations only, and never achieved discovery."

The music of an intimation—that is *Hyperion;* no more. It is not a finished work of imagination. Even without critical study, the reader cannot fail to see that various phases of the writer's development are huddled together; that what the youth had joyfully begun in the intoxication of enthusiastic planning had been finished by a disillusioned being in a mood of profound discouragement. The second part of the novel is autumnal and weary. Here and there only, as in a glass darkly, do we see the flames of ecstasy; and it is hard to recognize "the vestiges of earlier thoughts" amid the encircling gloom. *Hyperion* remained an unfinished dream; yet we forget its blemishes and inadequacies in the rhythm of the diction, which charms our senses in the uninspired no less than in the inspired passages. Ger-

man imaginative writing can show nothing more ethereal than the melody which continues throughout this work. Sublime words rose spontaneously to Hölderlin's lips, and the music of speech was his element. Melody therefore suffuses *Hyperion* without the sense of effort, endowing even its weaknesses with charm. It fills out the garments of the improbable characters, giving them a semblance of life; it endows the poverty-stricken ideas with so much linguistic force that they seem to be the voice of God; and the borrowed descriptions of places on which the author had never set eyes are equipped with the magic of music heard in dreams. Hölderlin's genius derives its strength from the impalpable, the incommensurable; his impetus is inexhaustible; he overpowers our hearts by swooping into them from the lofty skies of another world. Despite his weakness as an artist and his incompetence for life, he conquers by his singleness of purpose and by the music of his words.

"THE DEATH OF EMPEDOCLES"

Clear as the tranquil stars of heaven,
From lasting doubt pure characters proceed.

In *Empedocles* we have an intensification of the sentiment underlying *Hyperion.* Whereas the earlier work was an elegy of intuition, the later is a tragedy of the full awareness of destiny. The dreamer, the seeker, has become the hero, awake and fearless. After "his soul had been utterly mortified," Hölderlin made a huge stride forward towards resignation—and beyond into that voluntary acceptance of destiny characteristic of the great figures of antiquity. Hence, though the music of both these works is mournful, there is a striking contrast between them. What in *Hyperion* is no more than a murky dawn has in *Empedocles* become a storm-cloud louring with the menace of imminent destruction. Whereas Hyperion was still concerned with the hope of a noble life, with the unity of existence, Empedocles, in whom dreams had been replaced by sublime knowledge, looked forward, not to a great life, but to a great death.

Hence the figure of Empedocles towers above that of the confused and weakly Hyperion. *Empedocles* has a nobler rhythm, for it embodies the demands of genius, whereas Hyperion had merely disclosed the casual distresses of our human lot. The lad's sorrows are common form, but the pangs of the man of genius are peculiar to himself. Such sufferings are holy. "Their pain is divine."

A voluntary death, accepted wholeheartedly and intended to force a passage into the realm of the beautiful—this was what Hölderlin wanted to portray, with himself thinly veiled as the chief person of the drama, for there can be no doubt that he had been near to suicide. Among his papers there is the sketch of a play to be entitled *The Death of Socrates*. The heroic death of a sage, a free spirit, was to be depicted. But soon the shrewd sceptic Socrates was replaced by the traditional image of Empedocles, of whom we know little more than that "he proudly declared himself to be something greater than ordinary mortals, who are foredoomed to corruption." This conviction that he was different from other men made him Hölderlin's spiritual ancestor, the philosopher handing down across the millenniums his disillusionment with the integrated world and his wrath with unbelieving and selfish humanity. To the lad Hyperion, Johann Christian Friedrich had been able to transmit only his musical intuition, a vague yearning; but into the reincarnated Empedocles he infused his mystical interlinking with the universe, his ecstasy, and his profound intimation of doom. In *Hyperion,* Hölderlin had been able merely to poetize and to symbolize; but in *Empedocles* he manifested a divine frenzy and incarnated his longing to enter into communion with the universal.

As Hölderlin's first draft of the poem explains, Empedocles of Agrigentum was "a sworn enemy of all narrowness." Life and mankind were a distress to him because he found it impossible "to live with his fellows and to love them with an open heart, as intimately, as freely, as expansively as a god." That was why Hölderlin equipped him with his own most essential characteristic—indivisibility or "purity" of feeling. As poet, as true genius, Em-

pedocles had the grace of "heavenly kinship with eternal nature."

Yet for the very reason that his thoughts and feelings were universally comprehensive, the Master suffered because life is disintegrated; "because all that exists is subject to the law of succession"; because gradations and thresholds and doors and partitions are perpetually restricting unity—so that even enthusiasm is unable, in its crucible, to fuse existence into a homogeneous whole. Thus did Hölderlin project into the cosmos the personal experience of cleavage between his faith and the jejuneness of the world; endowing Empedocles with the ecstasy of his inspiration, and also with the depression which was its obverse. At the moment when Hölderlin brought him on to the stage, Empedocles was no longer wholehearted in his self-confidence. The gods (for Hölderlin this was equivalent to what he meant by "inspiration") had forsaken him, "had robbed him of his powers," because, in the pride of his strength, he had vaunted his happiness:

> Our brooding God
> Abhors
> Untimely growth.

Empedocles' sense of sublime isolation had been intensified to rapture. In his Phaethon flight he had soared so high that he had come to regard himself as God, declaring:

> Nature, craving a master,
> Has become my handmaiden.
> If honoured still, to me she owes it.
> What were the seas and the skies,
> The islands and the constellations,
> What were the things that delight men's eyes,
> What this dead lute, unless to them all
> I gave tone and speech and soul?

What were the gods and their spirit
But for me, their revealer?

Now he has lapsed from grace; overwhelming power has been replaced by powerlessness; and to the stricken man "the wide world, abounding in life," has become "a lost heritage." The voice of nature no longer awakens harmonious echoes in his breast; he has fallen from heaven to earth. This is the story of Hölderlin's experience when inspiration failed and he was hurled back into the world of chill realities, for the drama incorporates his reminiscences of the humiliations which had engulfed his own self. Men recognize the genius grown impotent, vent their spite upon him, attack him when he is defenceless, driving Empedocles from his city and his home (just as Hölderlin had been driven from his home and his love) and hunting him into solitude.

But there, on the summit of Mount Etna, where nature spoke once more to the lonely man, he regained his full stature, raised his voice as of old in heroic song. As soon as Empedocles had quaffed a draught of the crystalline water of the mountain-top, the purity of nature was magically reinfused into his blood.

'Twixt thee and me
The old love dawns anew.

Sorrow is transformed into knowledge, and necessity transmuted into a joyful affirmation. Empedocles perceives the way home; he will pass beyond men into loneliness, will quit life for death. His supreme and blissful longing is to return to the All; and, inspired with faith in the universe, he proceeds to fulfil his desire:

Mostly
The children of earth dislike the new and the strange.

. . . In life their chief concern
Is love of worldly possessions. At last,
Relinquishing these, they must follow the call
They have dreaded to hear. And then,
Refreshed with a strength elemental,
They bathe in the waters of youth.
For to man is the privilege granted
Of finding rejuvenation
In a death at the fit moment chosen,
Since thereat, like Achilles dipped in the Styx,
Invincible rise up the nations.

"Oh, give yourselves to nature ere she claims"—such is the intoxicating thought of a voluntary death, now that the sage has come to understand the esoteric significance of a timely departure, of the inward or subjective obligation to die at will, instead of waiting for a doom objectively imposed. Life destroys us by disintegration; death restores our purity by reabsorbing us into the infinite. ("The dewdrop slips into the shining sea.") Purity is the supreme law of the artist. What he has to preserve unpolluted is not the vessel but the spirit it contains:

Betimes
Let him depart through whom the soul has spoken;
For nature, the divine, oft shows herself
Divinely to us men, in this same way
To earnest seekers what they seek revealing;
And he whose heart she fills with ecstasy
Will faithfully proclaim her. Thereupon
Delay thou not to break the chosen vessel,
For else it may some baser usage serve,
What should be God's, becoming only man's.
'Tis better they should die, these fortunates,
Before (to trifles, shames, and weaknesses a prey)
They perish ignominiously. 'Tis better, far,
For the free man to choose his time for death,
A loving sacrifice to the high gods.

Only death can cherish the sacred fire of the poet, enthusiasm cleansed from life's besoiling touch; only death can give his existence an undying purpose:

> . . . as befits him for whom,
> When death came in a consecrated hour,
> The heavenly powers had their veils withdrawn,
> And unto whom light was vouchsafed, whose soul
> Was quickened by the Spirit of the World.

From the premonition of death he derived the last and loftiest inspiration. Like the dying swan, he once more uplifted his soul in song, a song that began gloriously but remained unfinished. Hölderlin could not transcend the beatitude of self-dissolution, though from beneath rose a chorus, to accompany the voice of the departing seer, in praise of ἀνάγκη, eternal necessity:

> Thus must it, then, happen,
> By the spirit's decree
> And when the time is ripe.
> Once at least must blind mortals
> Behold a miracle.

Then the antistrophe extols the inconceivable:

> Great is his godhead,
> And the victim is great.

With his last word, with his last breath, Hölderlin continued to sing the praises of fate, remaining a worshipper of "sacred necessity."

Never did Hölderlin the creator draw so near to the world of Hellas as in this tragedy, whose twofold presentation of sacrifice and sublimity lifts it to the level of the dramas of ancient Greece. What Goethe had failed to do in *Tasso* because he conceived the poet's torments only in terms of wounded vanity and the illusions of a presumptu-

ous love, Hölderlin made a success of in *The Death of Empedocles* because the tragedy rings true. Empedocles is depersonalized. His tragedy is the tragedy of poiesis. There are no futile episodes, there is not a fragment of theatrical padding, to hinder the onrush of the drama; no women impair the movement with erotic interludes; no underlings play a part in the dread conflict between the solitary and his deities. As in the works of Dante, Calderon, and the Greek dramatists, the destiny of the individual is given ample surroundings and stands under the skies of the ages. No other tragic drama penned in the German tongue has so vast an amphitheatre; no other makes us forget so completely the stage with its footlights, transporting us to the agora, the festival, the sacrificial altar. In this fragment, as also in Kleist's *Robert Guiscard*, a vanished world is made alive for us once more by the writer's passionate will.

HÖLDERLIN'S POETRY

That which is pure from birth onwards is an enigma which even song can scarcely solve; for as you begin, you will remain.

Of the "four elements" known to the Greeks—fire, water, air, and earth—Hölderlin's poetry has but three. There is lacking to it earth, the dark and clinging element, connective and formative, the emblem of plasticity and hardness. His verse is made of fire, the symbol of the ascent heavenward; it is light as air, perpetually athrill like the rustling breeze; it is transparent as water. In it scintillate the colours of the rainbow; it is ever in motion, rising and falling, the unceasing respiration of the creative mind. His poems have no anchorage in experience; they have no ties with the fertile earth; they are homeless and restless, scurrying clouds, sometimes tinged with the red dawn of enthusiasm and sometimes darkened with the shadow of melancholy, sometimes gathering into dense masses from which flash the lightnings and thunders of prophecy. Always they climb towards the zenith, towards the ethereal regions far from solid ground, beyond the immediate range of the senses. "Their spirit stirs in song," writes Hölderlin of the poets; and again: "Warmed by its own fire, the spirit rises." Feeling is sublimated by combustion, vaporization, clarification of that which is material.

Thus for Hölderlin poesy is a dissolving of earthly matter into spirit, a sublimation of the world into the world-soul; it is never a condensation, a thickening, a consolidation. Goethe's poems, even the most highly subtilized of

them, have substantiality; we feel the fruit that has formed in them and can cognize them with our senses, whereas Hölderlin's are such stuff as dreams are made on. In Goethe's writings there is a tang of warm corporeality, an aroma of the epoch to which they belong, a sapid flavour of earth and human destiny. They contain emanations from the individuality of Johann Wolfgang, fragments of his particular world. Hölderlin's verses are expressly depersonalized. "That which is individual conflicts with the pure which it apprehends," he writes somewhat cryptically, and yet with a meaning that emerges. Because of this lack of substantiality his poetry has a statics all its own. It does not circle quietly, self-contained and self-supported, but is, like an aeroplane in flight, sustained only by its impetus. As we read, we never lose a sense of the angelic, of something that is divinely white, sexless, and soaring, of something that moves across the world like a dream, blissfully imponderable and merged in its own melody. Goethe stands on the ground as he sings, but Hölderlin sings from the upper levels of the atmosphere. For Hölderlin, poesy (as for Novalis, for Keats, for all the geniuses who died young) is the overcoming of gravity, is self-expression in music, is a return to the ethereal.

The fourth of the elements, on the other hand, the hard and heavy earth, plays no part (let me repeat) in the winged structure of Hölderlin's poetry. For him it is base and hostile, something from which he has to escape, the embodiment of gravity which continues to remind him of his earthly lot. Yet earth likewise furnishes splendid energies to the creative artist, giving stability, contour, warmth, momentum, divine afflatus to him who knows how to use it. Baudelaire, who, writing with no less passion, wrought out of earthly substance, was perhaps the perfect

lyrical antithesis to Hölderlin. His poems, wholly the outcome of condensation whereas Hölderlin's were the result of rarefaction, were as steadfast in face of the infinite as was Hölderlin's music; their crystal clarity and impetus are no less sure than Hölderlin's transparency and sublimity. The two writers are as sharply contrasted as earth and sky, as marble and cloud; but in both, the intensification and transmutation of life into form, plastic in one case and musical in the other, are complete. They are the respective extremes of condensation and rarefaction. In Hölderlin's poems, the ignoring of the concrete, or (as Schiller called it) "the repudiation of the accidental," is carried so far, the circumstantial is so entirely disregarded, that often enough the titles seem to have no relation to the contents. Read, for instance, the odes to the Rhine, the Main, and the Neckar, and notice how even the landscape is depersonalized, so that the Neckar debouches into the Attic sea of his dreams, and Greek temples adorn the banks of the Main. His own life is resolved into a symbol; Susette Gontard is spiritualized into the vague image of Diotima; the fatherland becomes a mystical "Germania." The lyrical process of combustion leaves no earthy ash behind, no dross of personal experience. Whereas for Goethe experience was transmuted into verse, for Hölderlin experience vanished or evaporated to become a poem, dissolved into melody. Hölderlin does not transmute life into poesy, but flees from life into that which for him is something higher and more real than what is usually called reality.

This lack of earthliness, of sensuous distinctness, of plastic contour, affects not only the objective characteristics of Hölderin's poetry, making it seem void of bodily substratum; the medium as well, the language, has no substance, no weight, no colour, no smell of earth, no "fruitiness";

it is wraithlike, diaphanous, impalpable. "Language is a great superfluity," says his Hyperion, but underlying this is a haunting sense of inadequacy. The fact is that Hölderin's vocabulary is scanty, for he refuses to draw from all available sources, will employ only very select words found in the purest springs. His linguistic treasury contains barely a tenth of Schiller's riches, barely a hundredth of Goethe's, for Goethe went boldly and unprudishly into the marketplace to cull and rearrange the homely flowers of folkspeech. Hölderlin's verbal equipment, thrice-sifted, has nothing torrential in its flow, lacks multiplicity, is inapt for the expression of the finer shades of meaning.

He was aware of this arbitrary restriction which his temperament imposed on him and of the dangers involved in renunciation of the world of the senses. "What I lack is not so much strength as delicacy of touch, not so much ideas as nuances, not so much a fundamental tone as manifold co-ordinated overtones, not so much light as diversified shades; and this depends upon a very simple cause—that I dislike the meannesses and commonplaces of actual life." He would rather remain poor, would rather leave language in its charmed circle, than transfer into his holy of holies the minutest particles from the abundance of an unsifted world. Rather than vulgarize lyrical speech, he would restrict himself, "without any ornamentation, almost exclusively to great tones, each of them integral, and sounded in varying successions of harmony." According to him poesy is not something to be contemplated in a mundane sense, but to be perceived as a thing divine. Even monotony is preferable to sullying purity, for purity is more important than wealth of diction. That is why, in his writings, we find ceaseless repetitions (though with masterly variations) of such adjectives as "divine," "heavenly," "sacred," "eter-

nal," "blessed." It would seem as if the only words acceptable to him were those hallowed by antiquity, and that he must have deliberately rejected those to which there still clung a lively odour of his own time, those which came to him warmed by close contact with the thronging masses. As an officiating priest must be clad in white raiment, so Hölderlin's poems had to be dressed in an unadorned linguistic vesture which would distinguish them at the first glance from the writings of the frivolous, the shallow, and the pleasure-seeking among German poets. He deliberately chose nebulous words, esoteric terms, conveying a spiritual, ceremonial, consecrated aroma—carrying a whiff of incense. The racy, the readily comprehensible, the plastic elements of literary style were rejected. Hölderlin never picked out his words for their weight or their colour, never selected them because of their suitability to stir the senses, but because of their power to make an appeal to the imagination, to withdraw the reader from the sensuous universe, to lift him out of his mortal life into the realm of "divine ecstasy." The epithets "blessed," "heavenly," "sacred"—angelic and sexless words—are as colourless as white sails, but they carry us upwards into the empyrean when bellied like sails with the breath of enthusiasm, with the hurricane of rhythm. The essential characteristic of his poems is their aspiring trend. Their opening lines arouse the impression that we are quitting solid ground to soar into space.

What a contrast with Goethe! In the latter's writings we are aware of no abrupt transition as we pass from his poetic prose (that of his early letters, in particular) to his poems; he is an amphibian, equally at home in both worlds, that of prose and that of verse. Hölderlin, on the other hand, is heavy unless he is singing; in his letters and his essays his prose stumbles over philosophical formulas; this man who

moves with such ease in his natural medium of inspired verse limps in this sphere. Like the albatross in Baudelaire's poem, the creature that wings its way so gloriously among the clouds makes a poor showing on the ground. But when Hölderlin sings, he soars. In *Empedocles*, for instance, there is not a line in which he drops back to earth. Poesy was more natural to him than mundane speech—was, so to say, his idiom. His personal fate symbolized this, for when Hölderlin became insane he was incapable of ordinary conversation, and yet to the last hour his trembling lips could give utterance to melodious rhythms.

Not in early youth, however, could it be said of him that he was a "born poet." In his first boyish endeavours, he lacked the power of untrammelled flight into the ether. His poems did not acquire strength and beauty until the daimon had overpowered the "reasonable" man. His first attempts at poesy were crude, of little account, and devoid of individuality. The lava had not yet forced its way through the crust. At the outset he was an imitator to an almost inexcusable extent; for not only did he borrow the form of his verses and their intellectual atmosphere from Klopstock, but he unscrupulously inserted lines and stanzas of the latter's into what purported to be his own manuscript poems. Soon, however, Schiller's influence became predominant at the Tübingen seminary; and Hölderlin, now "inalterably dependent" upon him, adopted his mental atmosphere, his classical settings, his rhymed measures, his strophic pulsation. The bardic ode gave place to the euphonious, clear-cut, resounding, and somewhat ponderous Schillerian hymn. But the pupil excelled the master. (To me, at any rate, Hölderlin's "To Nature" seems more beautiful than the most beautiful of Schiller's poems.)

Already in these later writings, modelled upon those of

the poet whom the young man at this date chiefly admired, there became manifest an elegaic trend, an inclination to develop the melodious form characteristic of the Hölderlin that was to be. All that was needed for the birth of "Hölderlinian verse" was a further advance along the same line, an unconditional surrender to the impulse towards the sublime, an abandonment of the form of classic verse while adopting the essential features of Greek and Latin poesy—freedom of rhythm and absence of rhyme.

In the end, however, he sloughs this last skin of the traditional, the last remnants of the systematized Schillerian constructions. He recognizes the splendour of the lawless, learns the transcendent value of lyric writing that relies exclusively upon an aspiring rhythm. Bettina von Arnim is an untrustworthy witness, but we can rely on her report of what Hölderlin said to Sinclair: "Spirit is the outcome of enthusiasm, and rhythm can be mastered only by him in whom spirit has quickened. One trained for poesy in the divine sense must recognize the spirit of the highest to be above the law, and must be prepared to sacrifice the law, saying: 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.' " For the first time, in his career as a poet, Hölderlin breaks away from rationalism, and allows himself to be taken unawares by the elemental force within him. The daimonic now finds rhythmical though lawless expression. The music of his innermost nature—chaotic, savage, eminently individual—wells up. It is the music of him who wrote: "Everything is rhythmical; man's whole destiny is a heavenly rhythm, just as every work of art is a unique rhythm." Regularity disappears henceforward from his lyrics, which have a melody all their own, the melody of an informal rhythm. The poems have become wholly incorporeal; light as air, and as unsubstantial, they have soared far above the realm of

the senses. Hölderlin's melody, like that of Keats and (sometimes) of Verlaine, issues from the universe and not from this little planet of ours. Its ultimate mystery is magical, inimitable, and is unique in the world of letters.

Hölderlin's rhythm is not stable, like (for instance) that of Walt Whitman—whom he resembles in the flow of his words—which is like that of a mighty river. At the outset of his career as a writer, Whitman discovered the method appropriate to him as a poet, and, having discovered it, went on using it for as long as he was able to write. Hölderlin, on the other hand, was continually strengthening his rhythm, which became more and more rustling, impetuous, confused, elemental, and stormy. He began like a gently bubbling spring, to end as a raging torrent. This liberation of his rhythm from restraints, this growth in masterfulness, this outburst of exuberance, took place (as in Nietzsche) concomitantly with a process of mental decay. The rhythm became freer proportionally with the severance of the logical ties in his mind, until in the end the poet could no longer control the flow, and therefore, a living corpse, he was swept away by the current of his own song. This movement towards freedom, towards a dictatorship of rhythm at the cost of intellectual orderliness, was gradual. At first Hölderlin discarded the clanking fetters of rhyme; then he found the restraint of having to clothe his thoughts in stanzas oppressive; then his verse hurtled into the infinite as bare of trappings as a Greek athlete. Conventional forms of verse checked the flow of his inspiration. All depths became too shallow, all words too dull, all rhythms too cumbrous. The lyrical structure, originally classical in its regularity, bent and broke; thought emerged ever more obscurely, powerfully, stormily, from a dense cloud of imagery; simultaneously the rhythmical breathing grew

deeper; bold inversions often connected a series of strophes into a single sentence. The poems are songs, hymned appeals, prophetic visions, heroical manifestos. Hölderlin began to contemplate the world mythologically, to poetize existence. Europe, Asia, Germania, landscapes of the imagination, loom from spectral horizons; far and near, vision and experience, are fused in mighty improvisations.

"World becomes dream, and dream becomes world"—Novalis's description of the final illumination of the poet is at length realized for Hölderlin. The sphere of the individual has been transcended. "Love-songs are a weariness," he writes; "so are exultant songs of patriotism." The transition to mysticism has begun. Time and space have sunk into "empurpled obscurity"; reason has been sacrificed to inspiration. No longer does he write poems, but "poetic prayers," enveloped in Pythian vapours from which the lightnings flash fitfully. The enthusiasm of the youthful Hölderlin has become a daimonic inebriation, a sacred frenzy. These great poems have no course set for them; they move rudderless across a sea that has no limits, drifting at the mercy of the elements and obeying calls from an unseen world. At last Hölderlin's rhythm is stretched to the breaking-point; his language ceases to convey any meaning, being no more than "tones from the prophetic grove of Dodona." Rhythm does violence to thought, being "like Bacchus, foolishly divine and lawless." Poet and poem waste themselves in wanton exuberance, their energies dissipated in the infinite. Meaning has vanished in a chaotic twilight. The earthly, the individual, the shapely have disappeared in complete self-annihilation. Void of significance, mere Orphic melody, are his later words as they wing their way back into the ether which is their home.

FALL INTO THE INFINITE

What is unique, breaks.
EMPEDOCLES

Thus in stately fashion
Sets the star. Made drunken
By its light, the valleys shine.

HÖLDERLIN was thirty when the new century opened. During the last two years of the eighteenth century he did his best work. He had perfected his lyrical form and had created the heroic rhythm of his finest poems; he had placed his own youth on record in the figure of Hyperion the dreamer, and in *The Death of Empedocles* had immortalized the tragedy of the spirit. He had reached the zenith, and a piteous decline was at hand, a decline of which he had clairvoyant intimations, as when he wrote:

> Against his will a longing strange
> Draws him, draws him from rock to rock,
> Rudderless, towards the abyss.

It avails him nothing to have been one of the great creative spirits of his time. He who has longed for love, harvests only misunderstanding:

> This is
> A froward generation, which loves not
> To hear a demigod; nor to behold,
> Formless amid the clouds, a presence divine;
> Nor yet to see the face of one who reverences
> The pure, the close, the omnipresent God.

At thirty, he is still eating the bread of dependence, is still a private tutor, a probationer. He is still tied to his

mother's and his grandmother's apron-strings. The mother is an elderly woman now, and the grandmother very, very old; but the two of them still knit socks for him as they did when he was a boy, still make his underclothing. Having saved a trifle, he renewed in Homburg the attempt already made in Jena to support himself as a poet, since a poet's life was the only one which really suited him. This meant semi-starvation, but he was sustained by the hope "of attracting the attention of my German fatherland until people will at least begin to ask where I was born and who my mother was." By degrees the silence of the world undermined Hölderlin's courage. He knew at the bottom of his heart that "the holy remains holy, even when men fail to regard it as such"; in the end, however, faith was shattered by this lack of recognition. "We cannot continue to love our fellows unless some of them love us." His loneliness, long a sunlit stronghold, became wintry and icebound. "Silence grows on me, so that I am more and more heavily burdened, until I am irresistibly overshadowed." Again, in a letter to Schiller: "I freeze and stiffen in the winter that encompasses me. Under an iron sky, I harden into stone." There was nothing, there was no one, to warm him in his icy solitude. "So few still believe in me," he complained; and at last he ceased to believe in himself. What since childhood he had regarded as a sacred mission no longer appealed to him; he doubted the significance of poesy. His friends were far away; fame left him unregarded.

> Often I think it would be better
> To sleep than to be thus companionless,
> Than to persist. For what to do and what to say
> I know not; and why be a poet in so arid a time?

Again he was compelled to recognize how impotent is the mind to make headway against reality. Having "found it impossible to live exclusively by authorship unless one is willing to be subservient," he bowed his neck once more beneath the yoke. First of all he revisited his beloved home, and spent some happy hours with friends at the "autumn festival" in Stuttgart. Then he betook himself to Hauptwil in Switzerland, returning to drudgery as a private tutor.

Hölderlin knew that his sun was setting, that the clouds were gathering round him. He mournfully bade farewell to youth, and his verses shivered with the chill of eventide:

> Scant, scant my life, yet the cold breath
> Of nightfall comes. Mute as a shadow
> Am I already; and my sad heart
> Slumbers already songless in my breast.

His pinions were broken, and his balance was lost, for he did not truly live except when he was winging his flight, sustained by poetic impetus. He had to pay "for not having been content to remain at the surface of things," to pay "for having exposed my whole soul, whether in love or in work, to the risks of reality." The aureole of genius fell from his brow; he shrank into himself that he might hide from his fellows, for association with them had become physically distressing. As his power of self-control waned, the activities of the daimon grew more conspicuous in the twitchings of his nerves. The disorder of his mind showed itself in physical outbursts. Trifles made him irritable, and thereupon he threw aside the armour of humility. Over-sensitive, regarding himself as despised and rejected, everywhere he encountered fancied slights. He reacted more violently than of yore to changes in his mental environment. What to be-

gin with was only a "sacred discontent," developed into a neurasthenic malaise, into something catastrophic. His gestures were more violent, his moods more fulminating, his cheeks more sunken, and his once clear and steady eyes were clouded and vacillating. The trouble invaded his personality. The daimon gained increasing power over the victim. Unrest took possession of him, hunting him from one extreme to another, from hot to cold, from rapture to despair, from country to country, and from town to town. The febrile irritation spread from his nerves to his thoughts. At length the infection influenced his writing, the instability of the man showing itself as incoherence in the poet, who was now incapable of sticking to a point and of developing an idea in logical sequence. Just as he moved on restlessly from house to house, so did he leap from image to image, from thought to thought. This daimonic conflagration did not burn itself out until the whole inner man had been consumed, so that nothing remained but the blackened framework of his body.

Thus in the pathography of Hölderlin, in the story of his mental breakdown, there is no sharp borderline between sanity and insanity. The process of internal combustion was a slow one. The daimonic energy did not suddenly devastate his intelligence as if it had been consumed in a blazing forest, but burned it slowly, slowly, as though in a furnace with banked fires. Part of his nature, the elements most intimately associated with his poetic genius, had the resistance of asbestos. In him, imaginative insight survived the decay of his waking intelligence, melody outlasted logic, and the rhythmic faculty persisted when the linguistic faculty was moribund. During the onset of mental failure, the manifestations of restlessness, of nervous dread, of tetchiness, became from time to time intensified to maniacal excitation;

and such crises, while growing more and more violent, succeeded one another at shorter intervals. Thus, whereas in his earlier engagements as tutor he had been able to keep at work for months and even years before the tensions accumulated to produce a catastrophic discharge, at Hauptwil and in Bordeaux he was able to stay only a few weeks. His unfitness for ordinary life showed itself once more in incapacity for self-control, in aggressiveness; whereupon, like a piece of flotsam, he would drift back to his mother's house, the shore on which he was cast up after each of his voyages. In despair the shipwrecked mariner stretched out a hand for help to the poet who had been a formative influence in his youth, writing a poignant appeal to Schiller. But Schiller vouchsafed no answer, leaving the poor wretch to sink like a stone into the abyss of destiny. Unteachable as ever, he made a final attempt to earn his livelihood as tutor—at Bordeaux, far from home. Then, having failed yet again, he bade a last farewell to the uncongenial occupation.

Round this phase of his career a veil has been wrapped. We know, indeed, that he "wandered through France in fine spring weather"; and we read of a night spent "on the dreaded and snowclad mountains of Auvergne, amid storm and wilderness and icy cold, with loaded pistols beside me on my rough couch." We know that he reached Bordeaux to become a member of the household of the German consul in that city, and then left at short notice. Thereafter the mists redescend upon the story of his life. Was he the stranger of whom (ten years later) a lady spoke in Paris, as having seen him in her garden holding friendly converse with marble statues of the gods? Is it true that he had a sunstroke while tramping back to Germany; that "fire, the mighty element," laid him low; that, as he related, "Apollo" had pierced him with a flaming shaft? Did foot-

pads really strip him of his clothes and take from him what little money he had. These questions are likely never to be answered satisfactorily. This much is certain, that one day "an emaciated man, pale as death, long-haired and bearded, wild-looking, habited like a beggar," turned up at Matthisson's in Stuttgart and, when Matthisson shrank from him as from a ghost, the waif murmured the name "Hölderlin."

The wreck was now complete. The derelict whom reason had abandoned had drifted back once more to port, but thenceforward Hölderlin's mind remained under the shadow of a night that was illumined only from time to time by Orphic flashes. In conversation the plainest meanings were beyond the scope of his understanding; when he tried to write a letter the simplest purposes would be entangled in inextricable confusion; his intelligence became more and more cut off from the world, while his utterances were sound without sense. The conscious personality decayed stratum by stratum, until the unconscious assumed control, and he was but "the mouthpiece of an imperative from beyond" (in Nietzsche's sense of the phrase), spokesman of the sublimities which his daimon whispered to him and of which he was no longer consciously aware.

Most people shunned him because of his intense irritability, or they made mock of him in his rages. Only Bettina von Arnim (who resembled Beethoven and Goethe in her instinctive recognition of genius) and his faithful friend Sinclair could still perceive the divine spark in the man who had been "sold into slavery to the celestial powers." Bettina writes: "When I look at and listen to Hölderlin it seems to me as if a divine being must have overwhelmed him in a flood—a flood of language in which his intelligence is drowned." Most of Hölderlin's daimonic utterances in

this later phase have been lost, like Beethoven's improvisations; but Bettina gives us echoes of them when she reports to Karoline von Günderode: "To listen to him was like listening to the intermittent roaring of the wind, for again and again he would burst out into pæans, which died away into silence. Then would come a saying so profound that one forgot he was insane; and his remarks on verse and language seemed on the point of throwing light on the mystery of the latter. Ere long, however, his mind would darken once more; he would grow confused and incoherent. . . ."

After his return from Bordeaux, Hölderlin was for a time cared for by his mother at Nürtingen. Improving a little, in 1804, he was given the sinecure post of librarian to the landgrave of Hesse-Homburg, and lived in Homburg under the supervision of friends. Growing worse again, he spent two years in an asylum, from which he was discharged as incurable but harmless. By now his wild rages had ceased, and a permanent home was found for him as boarder in the house of a carpenter at Tübingen. This was in 1807, and he survived until 1843. Hölderlin, the youthful enthusiast, was no more. Like Iphigenia in Aulis, the gods had taken him to themselves in a cloud. What remained below was a living corpse, a being unaware of his identity, and even of his name; for sometimes he called himself "Herr Bibliothekarius" and sometimes "Scardanelli."

EMPURPLED OBSCURITY

If anyone lacking the frenzy of the Muses should try to enter the gate of poesy, his poems will pale before the art of one affected by this creative madness.

PLATO

THE great though cryptic poems which Hölderlin wrote during those years of twilight and darkness, his *Songs of the Night,* have no counterpart in literature—unless perhaps we may compare with them William Blake's *Books of Prophecy,* penned by that inspired contemporary likewise regarded as "an unfortunate lunatic whose personal inoffensiveness secures him from confinement." Both men wrote what the daimon dictated; neither could give an exoteric explanation of his esoteric compositions; in the case of each of them a hand unskilled for the tasks of ordinary life fashioned a heaven of its own above the familiar skies. For both, poetry (and in Blake's case draughtsmanship as well) was the vehicle of oracular messages. Just as the Pythian, made drunken by the vapour issuing from the chasm at Delphi and by the visions that revealed themselves to her in the fumes, would convulsively speak the words put into her mouth by Apollo, so did Hölderlin's daimon and Blake's hurl forth lava and red-hot scoriæ from what had seemed extinct craters of the mind. In Hölderlin's later poems it is not the earthly understanding which speaks (after the utilitarian manner of ordinary human beings), but rhythm itself, divorced from meaning, rhythm that has lost its way in the incomprehensible, yet will from time to

time throw a strange illumination into the dark abysses of the world. The seer dwells in an apocalyptic realm:

> The mountain of prophecy
> Towers above the valleys and the streams,
> That man may look forth into the east,
> And be guided by its transformations.
> But from the ether falls
> The picture true; thence rain God's sayings numberless,
> To resound in the innermost grove.

The language of dreams has become melodious revelation, "resounding in the innermost grove," a voice from beyond, the expression of a will far higher than that of the ostensible speaker, for the poet is but the unconscious herald of the primal word. It is the daimon who speaks behind the mask of what was once Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin.

For these *Songs of the Night,* these fragmentary clairvoyant inspirations, no longer derive from the carefully tilled and well-lighted precinct of earthly art, from a region that has been measured and plotted. They are not sedulously wrought in the workshop of the mind, but are shapeless masses of meteoric metal, fallen to earth out of the invisible heaven of inspiration, and bearing with them the magic of their extra-terrestrial origin. Every true poem is a tissue woven out of two strands, a warp that is unconscious and inspirational, and a woof that is purposive art. Sometimes the warp and sometimes the woof will predominate. In a "normal" man of letters—typically in Goethe—we find that as age advances there is a tendency for technique to outweigh inspiration; that what was to begin with mainly intuitive has been transformed into the deliberate mastery of a craft.

In Hölderlin's poems, on the other hand, we note a steady increase in the inspirational, the daimonic element,

in the improvisations of genius; whereas the intellectual, the purposefully artistic element passes more and more into the background and ultimately disappears. Rhythm takes charge, has become autocratic. The writer does indeed attempt, from time to time, to rebel against this autocracy, tries to develop one or another of his poetic themes in some sort of logical sequence. But the waves of the half formed wrench him from his holds, and he groans:

> Ah, how little we know ourselves,
> For within us a god rules!

The threads grow entangled, and he gives vent to whirling words, rhythmical indeed, but without beginning or end. Often fatigue overwhelms him and, forgetting what he has begun to say, he bridges some impossible gap with an inappropriate "namely" or "therefore," or breaks off resignedly by writing "much more might be said about this."

Yet in these stammering vocables, despite their seeming incoherence, there is often a sublime meaning. The writer is a prey to chance impressions, which his mind, "a garden full of weeds," can no longer knit into a concerted whole. Nevertheless, the living breath of Hölderlin's poesy still breathes through the tangled web. The seer's gaze envisages the world as one vast poetical conflagration. He even shows a profundity that was lacking prior to the wreck of his intelligence. "Thence rain God's sayings numberless, to resound in the innermost groves." His songs are now cosmic visions of the chaos which is their home.

Groping in the dark, illumined only by lightning-flashes and half blinded by these, he perceives wondrous interconnexions. Shortly before the end there is a last, a unique miracle. In the heart of the labyrinth Hölderlin grasps what he had vainly sought in earlier days—the mystery of

Hellas. On all the paths of his childhood he had looked for the key to this enigma; as a youth he had tried to find his Hellas in the heaven of idealism, in the land of dreams; vainly he had sent Hyperion to visit the shores of the present and the past. He had conjured up Empedocles from the shades and had conned the books of the sages; he had preferred "the study of the Greeks" to converse with his friends; he had been estranged from his homeland and from the age into which he had been born because he was continually voyaging to discover the Hellas of his imagination. In astonishment at the witchery, he had often asked himself:

> What is it, then,
> Which thus binds me fast
> To these old, these blessèd coasts?
> Why do I love them more than my fatherland?
> For, like one sold into slavery
> To the celestial powers, my home
> Is where Apollo walked of old.

Then, when his mind was hopelessly disordered, the mystery of Hellas suddenly revealed its meaning. As Virgil guided Dante, so did Pindar lead the bewildered Hölderlin, until the dazzled man saw—undimmed by mythology, sparkling like a great ruby that glowed from a new-made cleft in the rocks—that Hellenism of which none before him had dreamed.

In his chaotic renderings of Pindar and Sophocles, Hölderlin's language transcends the purely Hellenic, purely Apollonian clarity of the outset. Our lukewarm modern speech is transfused with the ardours of the Greek tongue. Like Michelangelo with his half-sculptured blocks of marble, in these shapeless fragments Hölderlin outdoes perfection, since perfection implies finish. Here the primal

energy of the universe when it was without form and void, and not the voice of an isolated poet, finds sonorous expression.

Thus gloriously, in "empurpled obscurity," does Hölderlin's spirit sink into the night, a funeral pyre that spouts tongues of flame heavenward before collapsing into ashes. Like his genius, which is that of the enthusiast, his daimon, fierce and melancholy, is godlike in stature. In other poets when the daimonic erupts, the volcanic eruption is usually tainted with the fumes of alcohol (Grabbe, Günther, Verlaine, Marlowe, Poe) or mingled with the stupefying incense of self-adulation (Byron, Lenau). But Hölderlin's intoxication is pure, and for this reason his exit is not a sinking beneath the waters of destruction but a hero's return to the realm of the infinite. He is redissolved in his primal element. His decline is music; his departure, song. As with Euphorion, the symbol of poesy in *Faust*, the son of the German spirit and the Greek, it is only the perishable, the bodily part of Hölderlin's being which is lost in the darkness of annihilation. His immortal song, the music of his lyre, rises for ever towards the stars.

SCARDANELLI

He is far away now, far, far away;
A wanderer he; for geniuses are
Not of this earth; he communes with
the gods.

WELLNIGH forty years did Hölderlin survive as a madman. What remained was the shade known as "Scardanelli," this being the name he wrote beneath his often unintelligible verses. Just as the world had forgotten him, so had he forgotten himself.

With the friendly carpenter, Scardanelli lived as boarder until far on into the new century. His fair hair was greyed and then whitened by the touch of time. Change and destruction wrought their will on the world of which he knew nothing. Napoleon made raids into Germany, Austria, and Russia; was driven back by the combined forces of a resurgent Europe; was sent to Elba and broke forth for the Hundred Days; and was then safely prisoned in remote St. Helena, chained there like Prometheus to the rock for six years until he died, and became a legend. But the lonely poet in Tübingen who had once sung the praises of "The Hero of Arcole" knew naught of these things. Schiller died in 1805, and his body mouldered for more than twenty years in its first resting-place, until in 1827 it was removed to another cemetery, and thoughtfully for a moment or two Goethe held his long-dead friend's skull in reverent hands. But all this time Hölderlin, who had so fondly admired Schiller, had forgotten the very meaning of the word "death." Five years later, when Goethe was eighty-three,

his own turn came to follow Schiller and Beethoven and Kleist and Novalis and Schubert into the land of the shades. Waiblinger, the young poet who as a student had often visited Scardanelli, had died prematurely two years before. Yet for more than a decade after Goethe's passing, Scardanelli lived on. Hölderlin's best-loved sons, Hyperion and Empedocles, forgotten for many years, had been recalled to the memory of others, and were enshrined in the hearts of the new generation; but no word of this revival made its way into the retreat at Tübingen. The recluse was dead to the world.

From time to time some stranger would call, curious to see the once great poet in his decay. There was a small house clinging to the old tower in Tübingen, and in a turreted chamber here were Scardanelli's narrow quarters, a room with a grated window commanding a fine view. The visitor would be shown upstairs to a door, through which came the sound of a voice—not of conversation, for the inmate of the room was only talking, poetizing, to himself, as he did for hours without ceasing. At other times he would sit at the piano, playing a brief succession of notes again and again and again, while his fingernails, grown rank, clicked on the worn keys. In one way or the other the demented man would perpetually satisfy his need for rhythm, an elemental music sounding through his worn-out brain as the wind murmurs for ever through the strings of an Æolian harp.

At length the awed listener ventures to knock at the door, and, being answered by a faint but startled "Come in," opens it, to see a lean figure, like one that appears to have stepped out of the *Tales* of Hoffmann, standing in the middle of the room. Scardanelli is a little bent with age, his white hair grows but thinly above the finely arched

brow. Fifty years of sorrow and loneliness have not wholly destroyed the nobility of aspect which was Hölderlin's in youth. Even more finely cut than of yore runs the line of the profile. Now and again the face, the hands, the whole frame, twitch convulsively; but meanwhile the eyes, once glowing with enthusiasm, remain motionless and blank. Yet there is life and there are gleams of understanding still in the ghost of what used to be Hölderlin, for poor Scardanelli bows subserviently as if in obeisance to some exalted visitor.

Yet it was strange. In this man whose intelligence was utterly obscured, in this man who could no longer be allowed to walk the streets (because the intellectual élite of Germany, the students, made fun of him, and amused themselves by giving him beer to drink and thus provoking violent outbursts), even beneath the ashes of a mind that had burned out, the spark of poesy was glowing. Scardanelli wrote verses—much as Hölderlin may have written verses during childhood—verses and imaginative prose. Hour after hour would he spend, filling one manuscript book after another. Mörike relates that "clothes-baskets full of these manuscripts" (which he heedlessly destroyed) were brought to him from time to time. When a visitor asked Scardanelli for a memento, the poet would at once sit down and, in a handwriting as good as ever, pen jingles about the seasons or Greece or some "spiritual" topic. For instance:

> Like day, which men with its clear radiance lights
> And with the light which out of scorn derives
> The twilit world of happenings unites,
> Is knowledge, in whose light the spirit thrives.

Inscribing at the foot a fancy date (of actual dates he knew nothing), he would sign: "Yours obediently, Scardanelli."

These jingles of the last phase, when mental failure was complete, are different from the writings of that earlier period of "empurpled obscurity" when the *Songs of the Night* were written. They emanate from a second childhood, having no more serious thought in them than nursery rhymes of the "Simple Simon" order. Free verse has been abandoned in favour of rhyme (or occasionally mere assonance), and the torrential current of undivided rhythms has given place to pools of short stanzas. The weary poet clings to rhyme as a crutch. None of the poems are perfectly clear and reasonable, and yet none of them are entirely unmeaning. They are still poems of a sort, these outpourings of Scardanelli's, not mere verbiage like the jingles penned by other lunatics with a turn for verse—for example, those produced by Lenau in the Wenigstädt asylum, "Die Schwaben, sie traben, traben, traben." Scardanelli continues to use similes, though they are not always easy to understand; and with distressing frequency he shows awareness of his unhappy state, as in the heartrending quatrain:

> The pleasures I once knew have long since left me;
> Of all my joys, alas, has time bereft me;
> The merry months of springtime have departed,
> And I am naught, life-weary, heavy-hearted.

Like a clock which has lost its hands, but whose mechanism continues to tick aimlessly, Scardanelli goes on poetizing in a world of which he is no longer a part. Poetry is still the breath of life for him, even though he is "naught, life-weary, heavy-hearted." In truth his supreme longing has been fulfilled, though, tragically enough, in a manner which smacks of caricature. What survives in him is poetry, and nothing more. The man has died before the poet; rea-

son, before melody. His end is that which, long since, he had proclaimed to be the true end of the true poet: "Consumed in the flame, to atone thereby for his failure to control the flame."

The dying oak tree will outlast the storm.
The soundest oak of all, the forest's pride,
Falls to the ground, uprooted by the blast.
And why? Because its branches catch the wind.

PENTHESILEA

Kleist

1777–1811

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THE HUNTED MAN

No doubt you find me hard to understand.
Take comfort, friend; through me God
speaks to you.

THE SCHROFFENSTEIN FAMILY

THERE was no point of the compass towards which Kleist did not travel in Germany, nor any town of note in which he, a homeless wanderer, did not sojourn for a time. He was almost unceasingly on the go. From Berlin he drove by diligence to Dresden, into the Erzgebirge, to Bayreuth, to Chemnitz; then he was off again to Würzburg; thereafter, athwart the Napoleonic campaigns, to Paris. He had planned to spend a year in the French capital, but within a few weeks he set out for Switzerland, moving from Berne to Thun, to Basel, and then back to Berne. Next, as if flung thither like a stone, he suddenly appeared at Osmanstedt, Wieland's home, near Weimar. After a brief stay there, he went hotfoot to Milan, visited the Italian lakes, and betook himself to Paris once more. Having made a futile rush to Boulogne, where he was in the midst of a hostile army, he found himself in Mainz, recovering from a dangerous illness. The next flight was to Potsdam, and the next after that to Königsberg, where he actually remained a year, occupying a post he had longed for. Breaking loose again, he set out for Dresden, which meant crossing the French armies on the march. Arrested on suspicion of being a spy, he was sent to Châlons, and had no choice but to stay there six months. Released at length, he zigzagged back

to Dresden, whence, during the full blast of the Austrian campaign, he started for Vienna, was arrested at Aspern while the battle was in progress, but escaped, and fled to Prague. Sometimes he vanished like a river that runs underground, to emerge at an immense distance; but always, again and again, a sort of gravitational force drew him back to Berlin. With broken pinions he fluttered away once or twice more, at length to his birthplace Frankfurt an der Oder, where he had relatives and hoped to find a refuge from the hunter who was ever on his trail. Nowhere could he rest. For the last time, therefore, he climbed into a post-chaise (which had been his only true home during the thirty-four years of his life) and drove to Potsdam, where, beside the Wannsee, he blew out his brains. He was buried by the roadside.

What moved Kleist to take these journeys, or, rather, what force moved him hither and thither? For his journeys had no meaning, nor usually any definite aim. They elude logical explanation. Unbiased study discloses that the "reasons" for them were in most cases mere pretexts, masks to hide the visage of the daimon. To sober-minded thinkers, the wanderings of such an Ahasuerus remain enigmatical, and it was natural that he should have been thrice arrested as a spy. In Boulogne, Napoleon was waiting with a great army in the hope of invading England. When the man who not very long before had been an officer in the Prussian service turned up like a sleepwalker among the French troops, only a miracle saved him from the firing-squad. Then, when the French were marching on Berlin, he strolled across their files—to be seized and interned. At Aspern the Austrians were fighting a decisive battle, and again our somnambulist appeared among his French enemies, armed with no better warrant for his presence than

a few patriotic poems in his pocket. Such heedlessness is inexplicable on rationalist principles; nothing can account for it but obsession, nothing but the unrest of a tortured spirit. Certain authorities speak of secret missions. The explanation may apply to some of the numberless journeys, but not to the perpetual flittings characteristic of the man. In general his wanderings were purposeless.

His wanderings were purposeless. He did not aim at any particular town, any specific country, any clearly contemplated goal. He sped through the air like a random shaft whose only object was to escape from a tensed bow. He was running away from himself. He changed one town for another as a man in a fever changes one pillow for another. Lenau, inwardly akin to Kleist, uses this very image in his poem "The Madman." At each remove, no doubt, he hoped to find healing; but those hunted by the daimon are granted no respite and never know the joys of home. In like manner did Rimbaud storm from country to country; Nietzsche, from place to place; Beethoven, from dwelling to dwelling; Lenau, from continent to continent. The whip that drove them was part of themselves, elemental restlessness, tragical inconstancy. They were the quarry of an unknown power, foredoomed never to escape. Escape was impossible, since the hunter circulated in the blood of the hunted, and was dominant within the victim's own brain. Only by self-destruction could they destroy the inner enemy, their lord and master, the daimon.

Kleist knew from the outset that the daimon was hounding him into the abyss. What he did not know was whether he was striving to avoid the abyss or hastening towards it. At times he seemed to be convulsively clinging to life, to be digging his fingers into the last clods of earth that could save him from falling into the depths. He struggled to

escape, held out imploring hands to his sister, to various women, to men friends. At other times, he craved for the fatal plunge. He was unceasingly aware of the gulf that yawned, but not whether it yawned in front of him or behind him, whether it was life or whether it was death. Because the chasm was within, he could not escape it. It went with him everywhere like his shadow.

In his passage from land to land he was like one of those Christian martyrs who by Nero's orders were wrapped in tow and lighted, so that, living torches, enveloped in flames, they ran madly, knowing not whither. Kleist never saw the milestones on his road, and one may wonder whether he fully opened his eyes in the towns through which he scampered. His life was unceasing flight, and he panted as he fled with wildly throbbing heart. That is why he uttered a cry of jubilation, at once glorious and horrible, when at length, weary of his torments, he voluntarily hurled himself into the abyss.

Kleist's life was not a life but a mad chase in which he was the quarry, a hunt with its smell of blood and its sinister atmosphere of cruelty, amid the trumpet-calls of excitement, the baying of hounds, and the death-halloos of huntsmen with nerves atwitch for the slaughter. A pack of misfortunes was ever hard upon his heels; a stag close-pressed, he would flee into a thicket; then, turning at bay, he would make one of the hounds of destiny his victim (three, four, or five works composed in the heat of passion bear witness to these sudden changes of will); and thereupon, dripping blood from his wounds, he would again betake himself to flight. But when at last the survivors of the pack thought to seize him and rend him, with a splendid rally of his forces he eluded them by a sublime effort of self-destruction.

LIKENESS OF THE UNPORTRAYABLE

I know not what I am to say to you about myself who am indescribable.

FROM A LETTER

We have no likenesses worthy of the name. The clumsy miniature and the poorly executed portrait show a puerile face, although at the time they were taken Kleist was a man fully grown. He might be any German youth with a gloomy and questioning expression. There is no sign of a powerful imagination, or even of intellect; not a trait to arouse our curiosity or make us ask ourselves what spirit can have animated this cold brow. Having glanced at the depictions we pass on our way unsatisfied, unsuspecting, uninterested. Kleist's inner life lay deep. The secrets of his soul were not to be read in his countenance.

Nor have these secrets been disclosed to us by the verbal reports of his friends and contemporaries, which are scanty and convey little information. In one respect only they are unanimous, for all who knew him declared him to be inconspicuous, reserved, aloof, and, on the whole, "ordinary" to outer seeming both in nature and in looks. His was not an aspect that would entice a painter to take up the brush, a writer the pen. He must have been so inscrutable as not even to arouse the challenging impression of inscrutability! Friends and acquaintances met him year after year without being stimulated thereby to commit their thoughts of him to paper. We have not so many as a dozen anecdotal de-

scriptions of him for all the thirty-four years of his life. If you would understand how vague, how shadow-like was the impression produced by Kleist on his generation, you will do well to recall, in contrast, Wieland's account of Goethe's arrival in Weimar; and to remember how the fiery radiations that emanated from Johann Wolfgang blinded even those who saw him only from afar. Think, too, of the witchery exercised by Byron and Shelley, by Jean Paul and Victor Hugo—a charm made manifest by innumerable letters, by thousands of references to them in prose and verse. Hardly anyone has troubled to describe a meeting with Kleist. The three lines written by Klemens Brentano embody the most vivid pen-portrait that has come down to us, and even here the writer was more concerned with the character than with the aspect of the man: "a stocky fellow of thirty-two, with a bullet head and the signs of manifold experience in his face, variable in mood but with the goodness of a child, poor and staunch." No one looked him in the eyes to read his nature. When he disclosed himself to anyone, it was from within.

His shell was too hard—and this was the tragedy of his existence. He was reserved to excess, and kept everything locked up within himself. He did not express his passions either in looks or in spoken words. In fact he spoke little, partly because he had a slight stammer, of which he was ashamed, and partly because he kept his feelings under lock and key.

In one of his letters he made a distressing avowal of his incapacity for utterance, of the way in which his lips were sealed. "There is a lack of means of communication. The only one we have, language, is inadequate; it cannot depict the soul, and conveys no more than fragments. That is why I always have a feeling of horror when I am called upon to

disclose my innermost self in words." Thus he remained mute, not from dumbness or sloth, but from an overpowering chastity of feeling; and this silence, this dull, brutalizing, oppressive silence, which he would maintain for hours when in company, was his most salient characteristic—that and absence of mind, a confusion which obscured his clarity of intellect. When talking he would suddenly break off and stare into vacancy (contemplating the depths within). Wieland tells us: "At table he would often mutter to himself, with the air of a man who believed himself to be alone, or with that of one whose thoughts were far away." He could not converse unconstrainedly in an exchange of the small-talk of ordinary life. Conventional and customary obligations were repugnant to him, so that many assumed there must be something "dour and sinister" in this unusual companion; while others were wounded by his harshness and cynicism and bluntness when, as happened now and then, pricked by his own silence, he threw off all restraints. There was never any gentleness in his conversation, no sympathy in his looks or his words. Rahel von Ense, who came nearer than most to understanding him, said of him aptly: "The atmosphere round him was severe." Even she, who in general gave such vivid descriptions of the persons she encountered, shows us only this unportrayable aura, and fails to present us with a likeness. Thus he remains, for all time, a man unseen and "indescribable."

For the most part those who met him failed to pay any heed to him; others avoided close contact with him because he inspired dislike and even repulsion. Those who knew him loved him, loved him passionately; but even they, when in his company, were affected with a dread which annulled their power of expressing their affection. When his defences broke down, he disclosed his hidden depths,

permitted glimpses of a formidable, a fathomless abyss. The result was that no one felt at ease in his presence, and yet he exerted a magical attraction; the pressure of his atmosphere, his intense passion, his exaggerated claims (it was usual with him to demand a joint suicide!) made him insufferable. Everyone was drawn to him, but everyone shrank from his daimon; everyone felt him to be alarmingly close to death and destruction. When Pfühl called at his rooms one evening in Paris and found that he was not at home, the terrified visitor rushed off to the Morgue to look for Kleist's body among the suicides. When Marie von Kleist had not heard from him for a week, she feared the worst and sent her son to see what had happened. Those who did not know him intimately believed him cold and indifferent. His intimates, on the other hand, were afraid of the fires that consumed him. That was why no one could get into close touch with him or give him a helping hand, since he was too hot for some and too icy for others. Only the daimon remained faithful to him.

He knew that he was a thorny subject and once said: "It is dangerous to have anything to do with me." Consequently he made no complaint when people drew away from him, being aware that those who came near to him were singed by his flames. Through the extravagance of his mortal demands he troubled the youth of Wilhelmine von Zenge, his betrothed; squandered the property of Ulrike, his favourite sister; left Marie von Kleist, who was also dear to him, in loneliness and neglect; and dragged Henriette Vogel down with him to death. Becoming ever more keenly aware of the perilous effects of his inner life, of his daimon, upon others, he retired more and more into himself, growing more solitary even than nature had created him. During his last years he would spend day after day

in bed, smoking and writing. Rarely did he go out, and then only to coffee-houses. As his aloofness increased, people almost forgot his existence; and when in 1809 he disappeared for a few months, his friends (with little concern) assumed that he must be dead. Nobody wanted him. So lost was he to the world that no one would have noticed his departure from it had he not died in so melodramatic a fashion.

We have no likeness of him, neither of his bodily self, nor yet, except for his published works and his long letters, of the inner man. There was, indeed, an essay in self-portraiture which profoundly moved the few to whom he showed it. It was entitled *History of My Mind*, being a confession like that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The autobiography was penned not long before his death, but has not come down to us. Either he burned it, or else the uninterested guardians of his literary remains destroyed it, as they destroyed his novel and a good many of his other writings. Thus did his visage, throughout obscured by shadow, recede into utter darkness. We have no likeness of him, and know only his gloomy familiar, the daimon.

PATHOLOGY OF FEELING

Accurst the heart that knows naught of moderation.

PENTHESILEA

THE medical experts summoned instantly from Berlin to examine the suicide's body found it healthy and vigorous. There was no sign of disease in any of the organs, no cause of death but the obvious one—the self-inflicted injury to the brain. Still, it was necessary for them to display their learning, so they reported Kleist to have been "sanguino-cholericus in summo gradu," and that there were reasons for inferring the pre-existence of "a morbid emotional state." Empty words and unsubstantiated inferences! What is psychologically important is that direct examination showed all the organs to be sound. Nor does this contradict what some of those who had known Kleist declared after his death, that he had been subject to strange attacks of nervous collapse, that his digestion had been sluggish, and that he had had numerous other ailments. It seems probable that these troubles were the outcome of what nowadays psychoanalysts call "flight into illness," manifestations of the body's urgent need for repose after periods of mental stress. His physical heritage was robust almost to excess; his illness did not inhere in his flesh and blood; it was his doom to suffer from a ferment of the spirit.

Yet he was not a psychopath, was neither a hypochondriac nor a misanthrope (although Goethe once harshly said of him: "his hypochondria is extreme"). Kleist was not hereditarily tainted, was not mad; at most he was over-

wrought, as an outcome of mental stresses, of "conflicts" (to use another psychoanalytical term). His strings were taut, and when the genius touched them they twanged like those of a harp. He had too much passion; an overplus of feeling which could never secure adequate expression in word or deed, being held in check by a no less excessive moral conviction, a sense of subordination to the Kantian imperative. He was passionate to a fault, but passion was conjoined with an almost morbid sense of purity. He wanted to be invariably frank and outspoken, and yet he felt obliged to constrain himself to silence. That accounts for his unceasing tension and stagnation, and for the intolerable torment of his repressed urges. He had too much blood with too much brain, too much temperament with too much self-discipline, too much longing with too much moral restraint; was at one and the same time too much the man of feeling and too much the man of pitiless intelligence. Thus the conflict raged ever more furiously; and in default of a safety-valve the inward tensions could not fail to cause a rupture. Kleist had no safety-valve. He had no satisfactory means of expression in speech; none of his tensions found an outlet in conversation, in amusement, in transient erotic adventures; he never sought relief in alcohol or opium. Only in his dreams—his writings—did his luxuriant imaginings, his heated and often obscure impulses, find vent. In the fully waking state he sternly repressed them, though unable to conjure them out of existence. Had there been in his composition some admixture of laxity, indifference, boyishness, heedlessness, his passions would have lost the ferocity of chained beasts of prey; but he, whose feelings were so riotous, was a martinet where his behaviour was concerned, and he was therefore continually at war within. Like a beartamer, he used a red-hot iron, a fiercely ardent will, to

daunt the savage creature of the wild. But again and again the hungry monster rose in revolt, dashing furiously against the bars of its cage, until in the end it broke loose and tore him to pieces.

This incongruity between Kleist as he really was and Kleist as he would have liked to be formed the warp and the woof of the man's destiny. The two halves of his nature did not fit, and the result was everlasting friction. By temperament he was a Russian, a man of extremes, but he had been forced into the tunic of a Brandenburg Junker; he had great lusts, and was at the same time strongly convinced that he must not indulge them. He had an intellectual craving for idealism, but he did not, like Hölderlin, demand idealism from the world. The ideal morality he looked for was incumbent, not upon others, but upon himself. Furthermore, rushing always to extremes, he pushed this demand for morality beyond reasonable limits. It would have troubled him little to know that his friends, men or women, fell short of his code. But it was a continual hurt to his pride to find that the surge of his own desires was more than he could cope with; that, for all his determination to do so, he could not keep himself in hand. This accounts for the self-accusatory tone of his letters, for his feeling of self-dislike and self-contempt, for the sense of criminality which made him dread to look within, arrested his speech, and wounded him to the soul. He was always conducting an assize in which he was the accusing counsel, and in which the accused was himself. As Rahel von Ense said, "the atmosphere round him was severe," and no one suffered more from this severity than Heinrich von Kleist. When he looked within (and though he dreaded to do so, he had the ruthless courage to contemplate his own depths), he was horrified as if by a sight of the gorgon's head. He fell far short of what he

wanted to be, and hardly anyone has ever expected more of himself—small as was his capacity for fulfilling so lofty an ideal.

For, in truth, behind his cool and impenetrable mask, there was incubating a serpent's brood, each of the reptiles helping to keep the others cosy. His friends never glimpsed this infernal spawn beneath the impassive exterior, but its existence was no secret to himself. Only too well was he aware of the passions that flamed in his soul. During boyhood they had forced themselves upon his notice, and they never ceased troubling him. In Kleist the tragedy of the senses began early; from first to last they were too easily stimulated. I need not prudishly hesitate to mention this crisis of his youth, since he was frank enough about the matter to his betrothed and to his closest male friend. Besides, it is the clue that leads us into the labyrinth of his life of feeling. When still a cadet, and before he had had carnal knowledge of woman, he had done what nearly all warm-blooded boys do in the springtime of sexuality. Being what he was, being Kleist, he knew no moderation in his indulgence; and, being Kleist, he endured immeasurable moral agonies because of what he regarded as the culpable weakness of his will. He fancied that such auto-erotic voluptuousness tarnished his soul and would bring ruin upon his body, for his imagination, ever prone to run riot, painted the consequences of his boyish "vice" in flaming colours. What others learn to ignore as a youthful peccadillo was for him a cancer eating into his spirit. At twenty-one the (supposititious) failure of his sexual powers loomed before him like a gigantic spectre. In a letter he describes a young man he had seen —or fancied he had seen—in a hospital, "dying as a result of the errors of boyhood, with pale, nude, contorted limbs, sunken chest, and hanging head." This was "a warning

and a terror" to him. We feel, as we read, how the blue-blooded young Prussian was filled with self-loathing and self-contempt because of his inability to resist the promptings of his lust.

To heap tragedy upon tragedy, ignominy upon ignominy, the man who now believed himself to be impotent became engaged to a pure-minded and sexually unenlightened girl to whom he (while convinced that he was besoiled in every corner of his inner life) delivered interminable homilies on morality, and to whom he (while doubting his own capacity for fatherhood) gave detailed instruction on conjugal duties and the craft of motherhood. It was at this date that there began in Kleist the cleavage which resulted in persistent and intolerable tension. For a long time, in an agony of shame, he kept the trouble to himself, but at length he confessed to a friend the haunting conviction that his youthful self-indulgence had rendered him permanently impotent. This friend, Brockes by name, was not, like Kleist, prone to exaggeration. Taking a sensible view of the matter, he advised the sufferer to consult a Würzburg surgeon, and a few weeks' treatment—ostensibly an operation, but presumably according to modern lights the power of suggestion—effected a cure.

Kleist had no longer reason to regard himself as stricken with sexual inferiority. Organically, at any rate, he was thenceforward fully potent; but it would seem that his erotic life never became perfectly normal. In most biographies it is, perhaps, needless to lay much stress on these private matters, but as far as Kleist is concerned they provide a key to his writings. The wanton, extravagant, unbridled, orgiastic character of these, and his general tendency to hyperbole, were unquestionably the outcome of the before-mentioned sexual excesses. I think the works of no other famous imag-

inative writer have so clear a stamp of an immature virility, of the fantasies of one who lets his mind range uncontrolledly amid the phases of what the Freudians term "Vorlust" —anticipatory pleasure. Their clinical imprint (I expressly avoid writing their "stigma") is that of day-dreams which simultaneously excite, irritate, and exhaust, without achieving adequate gratification. Though in other realms than that of sex no author could be more lucidly matter of fact, when erotic episodes are in question Kleist instantly becomes oriental in his profusion. Then his waking visions outdo the extravagance of dreams (the descriptions of Penthesilea, the perpetually recurring image of the Persian bride, fresh from the bridal bath, totally nude, and dripping with sandalwood oil). On this side his organism, otherwise so sedulously hidden, has its nerves always exposed, with nerve-endings twitching at every stimulus. We recognize that the erotic hypersusceptibility of his youth was inextinguishable, that the inflammability of his senses was chronic, despite unceasing efforts at repression and in later years an inviolable silence. The balance of his love-life was never re-established; never was he able to direct his energies undeviatingly towards the aim of normal, healthy virility. There remained, on the one hand, a deficit, a lack of straightforward impulse; and, on the other, a surplus, an excess of ecstasy, of superheated passion.

In every relationship of life Kleist displayed the strangest, most multifarious, and most dangerous combinations of the too much and the too little. Just because the direct urge of desire, and perhaps of capacity, was unknown to him in the domain of sex, he was a prey to all kinds of intermediate shades of feeling. That explains his intimate acquaintanceship with the byways and aberrations of Eros, his strange and profound knowledge of what I may call the trans-

vestitism of the sexual impulse. Never, in the exploration of these manifold possibilities, does he exhibit an unambiguously normal erotic desire. Although the primary direction of his cravings had certainly been heterosexual, there were obvious vacillations. Whereas in Goethe and in most of our poets and novelists the needle of love pointed steadfastly towards the pole of woman (notwithstanding the minor tremblings that were the expression of flickerings in the magnetic attraction), Kleist's unbridled desires led him at varying times towards all points of the compass. When we read his letters to Rühle, to Lohse, and to Pfühl, we come across what seem to be the avowals of an invert. For instance: "How often, when you were stripped to bathe in the Lake of Thun, have I looked at your beautiful body as a girl might contemplate it!" Or, again, in plainer terms: "You brought back into my heart the age of Hellas, so that I should have liked to sleep with you!" Yet Kleist was not really a homosexual. All that had happened was that his love-sentiment, for want of the normal outlet, had flowed for the moment into devious paths. With equal erotic ardour did he write to "the incomparable," to his stepsister Ulrike, who (parodying the femininity of his own mode of feeling) used to dress as a man when she travelled with him.

Invariably his feelings were salted with an excess of sensuality; invariably did they show themselves to be aberrations. Towards Luise Wieland, when she was but thirteen, he played the role of spiritual seducer without any attempt at bodily misconduct; his feeling for Marie von Kleist was quasi-maternal; with the last of his inamoratas, Henriette Vogel, he did not enter into an intimacy (detestable word in this sense!), being bound to her only by the voluptuous craving for union in death. Even when he was most pro-

foundly stirred he did not surrender himself wholly and with the full tide of his energies to a love experience; never did he free himself (as did Goethe, for instance) either by action or by flight; always he remained grappled without power to grasp; always was he "the sensual, over-sensual wooer," inflamed by the subtle poisons in his blood. Masculine and feminine, the craving to possess and the longing to surrender, kindliness and cruelty, spirituality and sensuality—these conflicting elements were links of the chain that bound him. In the erotic sphere as in the other domains of life, Kleist was never the hunter, but invariably the hunted, thrall to the daimon of passion.

But for the very reason that his sexual impulses were ambiguous, and perhaps for the very reason that he was in this respect physically inadequate and lacked directness of aim, he excelled other writers of his day in the breadth of his knowledge of Eros. The overheating of his blood, the sensibility of his nerves, made conscious in him the passions which in more normally constituted persons wither in the twilight of the unconscious. These passions were incorporated into the characters portrayed in his writings. They are minutely depicted, but at the same time with an exaggeration which magnifies every feeling until it transcends the limits of the normal. The diversified phenomena which nowadays are crudely classified under the caption "psychopathia sexualis" find expression in his works with an almost clinical vividness. Virility is overstressed to the verge of sadism (Achilles and Wetter vom Strahl); sexual passion is shown working itself out as nymphomania and lust-murder (Penthesilea); feminine self-surrender displays itself as masochism and thraldom (Käthchen von Heilbronn); and with the foregoing are intermingled the dark

forces of the soul, such as mesmerism, somnambulism, and clairvoyance. It was not so much that he delighted in the uncanny as that he could (in some measure) gain control over the passions that raged within him only by flogging them forth into these creatures of his fancy. His art was a method of exorcism, a casting-out of evil spirits from his own tormented body into the realm of imagination. His Eros, failing to secure expression in the actual world, sought an outlet in fantasy. That accounted for the elements of distortion, gigantism, and menace in his creations—elements which alarmed Goethe and have repelled so many of Kleist's other readers.

Yet nothing could be more wrong-headed than for this reason to regard Kleist as fundamentally an erotist. We must not forget that in every temperament the erotic aspects overstress themselves as compared with the spiritual. If by an erotist you mean a voluptuary, the term is inapplicable to Kleist, in whose experiences active voluptuousness was completely lacking. He was the very opposite of a voluptuary, being always the sufferer, always the prey of his passions, one who could never achieve the realization of his ardent dreams. Besides, Eros was but one of the hounds that hunted him through life. His other passions were no less fierce, no less bloodthirsty. In this arch-exaggerator, every need, every feeling, was intensified to the pitch of the morbid, the maniacal, the suicidal. Whenever we open his books, whenever we contemplate his doings, we seem to be looking at a pandemonium of passions. He was full of hatreds, full of resentments, full of aggressive susceptibilities. We catch a glimpse of his frustrated will-to-power when the beast of prey breaks the chain and would like to bury its fangs in the throat of one of the titans—of a Goethe or a Napoleon. "I will tear the laurels from his brow"—these are the mildest

among the words he uses to express his fury against the man whom he had earlier reverenced "upon the knees of his heart."

Another of the hounds in the pack of his overstrained feelings was ambition, running in leash with an insane pride which roused him to fury at the lightest breath of criticism. Also there was a vampire sucking his blood, sapping his strength, gnawing at his brain—melancholy. This was not, like the melancholy of Leopardi or of Lenau, a passive mental state, a musical twilight of the soul, but, as he wrote, "a gloom I cannot master," a burning agony which drove him into solitude like the intolerable smart and the stench of Philoctetes' poisoned wound. This solitude was a fresh source of distress. The torture of being unloved (which in his *Amphitryon* he ascribed to the deity who created nature) was in himself accentuated into a frenzy of loneliness. Whatever stirred in him showed itself as morbidity or excess. Even spiritual trends, such as those towards morality, truth, and righteousness, manifested themselves as caricatures. The very love of justice became disputatious ("Michael Kohlhaas"); truthfulness grew fanatical; morality displayed itself as an ice-cold dogmatism. Always he overshot the mark; he thrust barbed and poisoned arrows into his flesh; he had to endure the bitterness of disappointment. He suffered thus intensely because these impulses, these virulent poisons, could not find exit; they struck inward and led to a dangerous fermentation; they failed, as his erotic impulses failed, to discharge themselves in action.

His hatred for Napoleon made him luxuriate in the thought of assassinating the tyrant, of laying the French soldiers low; but he never grasped the dagger or shouldered the musket. In the fragment *Robert Guiscard* he had planned to outdo both Sophocles and Shakespeare; but a

fragment the work remained. His melancholy goaded him out of his solitude and drove him to the unceasing search for a companion in a joint suicide; but he had to wait ten years before he could discover this fellow-traveller in a disillusioned woman already dying of cancer. His energies sustained, not actions, but only dreams, and made these both savage and sanguinary. Vainly, like Hamlet, did he wish that "this too too solid flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew!"; vainly did he seek "rest, rest from the passions." His daimon continued to ply the whip, lashing Kleist onward through the thorny thicket into the abyss.

Yet, for all that he was thus hunted, it would be a grievous error to regard Kleist as a man without an aim. The supreme tragedy of his life was an internal conflict. Driven forward by his passions, he at the same time longed to be steadfast; hunted by his impulses, he craved for purity. It is in the strength of this countervailing urge that Kleist differs so markedly from certain poets who in other respects seem of one flesh with him, from Günther, from Verlaine, and from Marlowe. Like Kleist they were men whose passions drove them towards destruction; but, being likewise men whose will was weak and womanish, they offered no resistance. They drank, they gambled, they squandered their substance in riotous living, and fate brayed them in a mortar; but they did not fall headlong into the chasm; they drifted gently from phase to phase of their moral and spiritual decay, with ever less and less inclination to put up a fight against the powers of darkness. In Kleist, on the other hand, a daimonic strength of the passions was countered by a no less daimonic strength of will—just as, when we study the man's writings, we see that they are the output of a frenzied visionary coupled with a sage, coupled with a cold and incredibly clear-sighted calculator. The will that opposes the

impulse is over-strong, like the impulse itself, with the result that a heroic combat rages.

Often enough Kleist seems to himself like Guiscard who, lying sick in his tent (his soul), is covered with boils and ulcers, racked with fever, poisoned by morbid humours, but by sheer force of will rises from his pallet and, stoically, hiding his secret sores, strides forth among his fellows. Kleist will not give ground, will not allow himself to be hurled unresistingly into the abyss:

> Stand firm of foot, stand firm as is the arch
> Because its every stone thrusts to the fall.
> Offer thy head, the keystone, to the flash
> Of God's own lightnings, with the cry "Well hit!"
> Making no moan when cloven to the chine,
> So long as but a fragment of sound stone
> Remains in thy young breast to brave the storm.

In this mood he defied fate; in this mood he set up against the hot impulse towards self-destruction the equally hot impulse towards self-preservation and self-exaltation. His life was a heroic struggle. He was not like most men who, of polar opposites, have too much of one and too little of the other; he had too much of both, too much spirit and too much blood, too much morality and too much passion, too much discipline and too much licence. He was a man cursed by superfluities; and, as Goethe phrased it, "the incurable disease with which this well-intentioned body was afflicted was, really, an excess of power." Of the ingredients out of which nature compounds a human being, she gave him more than one poor mortal can endure. The overdosage proved disastrous; the juices were too plentiful to be contained within the frail rind of man's body. The wine burst the bottle.

PLAN OF LIFE

Everything in me is in a tangle, like the fibres of tow on a distaff.

FROM AN EARLY LETTER

VERY soon Kleist became aware of the chaos in his feeling. During boyhood and adolescence, even more strongly than when at twenty he was an officer in the Guards, he perceived (half unconsciously) the revolt of the inner self against the restrictions imposed on him by the environing world. Yet he believed that his sense of conflict and estrangement was but the fermentation of youth, was produced by an unfortunate attitude towards life, and was, above all, the result of the lack of due preparation dependent upon a want of systematization on his part, caused by defects in his education. It is true that Kleist was never properly trained to meet the exigencies of life. Orphaned when still a child, he was boarded out with a parson who acted as tutor; then he was sent to a cadet school to study the art of war, although his tastes were musical (the primary expression of his longing for communion with the infinite). Only at off times could he gratify this instinctive desire by playing the flute, on which he is said to have been a creditable performer. His military duties in the strictly disciplined Prussian army had always to come first; the call to the parade-ground for drill, drill, and yet again drill. Then came the campaign of 1793, the dullest, most contemptible, most unheroic war in the annals of German history. He never referred to his experiences of active service as heroic

exploits; and an "Ode to Peace" breathes his yearning to escape the foolishness of war.

For him the tunic was a strait-jacket. He felt that great forces were stirring within him and would remain without effect upon the world until he had learned to control and to guide them. Since there was no one to teach him, he must be self-taught; he must "carve out a plan of life for himself," or must, as he also phrased it, "live rightly"; and, Prussian that he was, his first aim was necessarily to establish order. He must "order" his days, in accordance with principles, with ideals, with maxims. He hoped to put disorder to flight by leading a regulated life, by establishing a purposive routine, by moderation in all things. Then he would achieve "a conventional relationship towards the world." His fundamental notion was that everyone should have a plan of life—an illusion which stayed by him almost to the end. Everyone must conceive a goal, and then ponder the requisites for its attainment. In the conduct of the individual life, as in strategy and mathematics, ways and means could be carefully calculated. "A free spirit does not stay where chance has planted him. . . . He knows that he can master his fate, that he can guide his destiny into the proper path. By the use of his rational faculty he determines where he can find the sublimest happiness, and as the outcome of this recognition he sketches his plan of life. . . . Until he is competent to form his own plan of life, he remains immature, subject in childhood to the authority of his parents, and in manhood to the tutelage of fate." Thus did the stripling of twenty-one philosophize about life and believe himself empowered to override the decrees of destiny. He did not know that fate lay within him, beyond his control.

He marched sturdily forward into life; and, as a first

step to the fulfilment of the "plan," he stripped off his uniform. "A military career," he writes, "had grown so hateful to me, that by degrees I had come to find it intolerable to take any part in army life." But now, having broken the chains of one kind of discipline, could he find another discipline to replace it? I have already said that Kleist would have been no true Prussian had he not been imbued with a strong sense of order. Let me add that he would have been no true German had he not looked to education, to culture, as the supreme instrument for the establishing of the internal order he desired. For him, as for his co-nationals, culture was the arcanum. He read the authorities, attended lectures diligently, wrote copious notes, paid close attention to what the professors had to say. Such were the pointers that would serve as guide through the world. With the aid of maxims and theories, of philosophy and science, of mathematics and the history of literature, Kleist hoped to find the clue to this mysterious universe, to win an understanding of its spirit, to exorcize the daimon that possessed him.

Our extremist hurled himself into study. Whatever he set himself to do, he attempted with the red heat of his daimonic will; so that he became, as it were, drunken with sobriety and rioted in an orgy of scholarship. Like his spiritual forefather Doctor Faustus, he found the line-upon-line, here-a-little-and-there-a-little acquisition of knowledge too tedious. He wanted to reach the goal in a rush, with a leap; wished to grasp knowledge in a moment; and in a flash win to an understanding of life, and gain perception of its "true" form. Misled by the writings of the apostles of the Enlightenment, he believed, with the fanaticism typical of his impulsive nature, that "virtue" (as the Greeks understood it) could be "learned"; he believed in a formula of life, which "culture" would reveal to him, and to which he could then

have recourse, after the manner of one who uses a table of logarithms, for the solution of every problem of conduct. He therefore devoured learning, devoting himself now to logic, now to pure mathematics, now to experimental physics, then giving Latin and Greek a turn; "with the utmost diligence," and yet in truth aimlessly, as could only be expected in view of his undisciplined and over-zealous temperament.

He had to set his teeth in order to persevere. "My aim can be achieved only by the straining of my energies and the uninterrupted utilization of every minute of time"; but the "aim" remains shadowy. He studied in the void; and the more feverishly he piled up knowledge, the less clearly did he perceive to what end. "I cannot find any branch of science more attractive than the others. Am I to go on perpetually changing from one department of knowledge to another, while remaining always on the surface of things and never reaching the core?" In the hope of convincing himself that his studies were bearing fruit, he became a preacher, trying to indoctrinate his unlucky betrothed with a pedantically formulated code of moral behaviour. For months in succession he pestered the poor girl, schoolmaster fashion, with fair copies of documents in the question-and-answer style, insufferably logical, penned expressly for her educational benefit. Never was Kleist more uncongenial, more inhuman, more the scholastic freshman, more inveterately Prussian, than in this distressing phase when he was trying to discover his inner man by the light of books and lectures and aphorisms, when he was striving to mould himself into a "useful citizen."

But Kleist could not outrun the daimon; he failed to escape the hunter by burying him beneath tomes and pandects. A day came when out of his books there arose a con-

suming flame. Of a sudden, in an hour, 'twixt night and morning, his plan of life was annihilated, in that he forswore the religion of reason and lost faith in science. He had been reading Kant, the arch-foe of the German poets and novelists, their seducer and destroyer. The cold, clear light of the Königsberg philosopher dazzled him. With horror he found himself constrained to renounce what had been a heartfelt conviction. He became spiritually bankrupt. No longer could he believe in salvation by culture, in the cognizability of truth. "We are unable to decide whether that which we call truth is really truth or only its semblance." The "pointed shaft of this thought" penetrated into the "innermost sanctum" of his heart. Stricken to the core, he wrote in a letter: "My only, my supreme goal has been shattered, and I am bereft of purpose." No longer having a "plan of life," Kleist was once more left alone with himself, alone with this terrifying, enigmatic, burdensome ego which eluded control. Since, after his manner, he had staked his whole existence upon a single card, the spiritual collapse was infinitely perilous. Whenever Kleist lost faith, whenever one of his immoderate cravings was frustrated, it seemed to him that all was lost. Both the tragedy and the greatness of the man lie in this, that whatever feeling dominated him was, for the time, exclusive and overwhelmingly powerful. Only by an explosion, only through devastation, could he find issue into another path.

It was by destruction that he secured release. With a curse he shattered against the wall of destiny the chalice out of which for years he had quaffed intoxicating draughts. Reason, hitherto his idol, was henceforward "pitiful" reason. He fled from books, from philosophy, from theorems, from the rationalism he had cultivated to excess, and took

refuge in the opposite extreme, pursuing, with equal bigotry, a new ideal. "I loathe all that vaunts itself as knowledge." Like one who tears yesterday's leaf from the calendar, he threw his sometime faith upon the scrap-heap. He for whom education spelled deliverance, for whom knowledge had magical powers, for whom culture was the means of salvation, for whom study was defensive armour, now sang the praises of stupefaction, of ignorance, of the primitive, of a bucolic, a Bœotian existence.

Instantly—since patience and deliberation found no place in Kleist's vocabulary—he formulated a new plan of life, as weak as the old in its construction, as devoid of any foundation in practical experience. Our Prussian Junker now wanted "to lead a retired, tranquil, obscure existence"; he thought to turn farmer, to enjoy the solitude of which, not very long before, Jean-Jacques Rousseau had written with so much fervour. He asked for nothing more than the chance of devoting himself to the tasks which, according to the magi of old, were (when well performed) pre-eminently gratifying to the Almighty: to wit, "tilling a field, planting a tree, and begetting a child." Hardly had the thought entered his mind when it took possession of him. With his customary haste, he wanted to exchange wisdom for stupidity. Forthwith he quitted Paris, whither the desire to study a dismal philosophy had misled him; forthwith he broke off his engagement because his affianced did not unhesitatingly adapt herself to his change of mood, and expressed doubts whether she, the daughter of a general, could take kindly to the life of a milkmaid. Kleist could not wait. He was in a fever to put his new "plan" into practice. He read agricultural treatises, worked side by side with Swiss peasants, scoured the cantons (at the moment devastated by war) in

search of land to buy—daimonic as ever, even when his aim seemed unimpassioned, whether it was learning or agriculture.

His plans of life were like tinder: took fire and were reduced to ashes at the first contact with reality. The more he exerted himself to reach a goal, the more certain was he to miss the mark, for his fundamental characteristics led him to destroy his purpose by extravagance in its pursuit. Whenever he succeeded in anything, it was in spite of himself; for the dark forces within him achieved ends of which he had no conscious intimations. While first in the direction of culture, and then in the direction of unculture, he had sought an issue, his unconscious impulses were finding their own road; while, "secundum artem," he applied this remedy and that in the hope of relieving the fever that was consuming him, the secret ferment had been at work, the daimon had burst its bonds in sunder to break forth in song.

A prey to the somnambulism of his feelings, Kleist had in Paris aimlessly begun to write *The Schroffenstein Family*, and had diffidently shown his friends this first fruit of his fancy. Thereupon, precipitately recognizing that literary composition could open a safety-valve for his surcharged feelings, that here was a world in which the restraints and limits imposed upon his imagination could at length be thrown off and transcended, he rushed into this realm of boundless freedom—frantically eager, as usual, to reach the goal within a moment or two from the start. In poesy for the first time Kleist obtained a sensation of release. With jubilation he gave himself up to the promptings of the daimon (under the spell of an illusion that thereby he would escape the hunter) and hurled himself into the chaos of his own being.

AMBITION

It is unwarrantable to awaken the ambition that lies within us, for then we are delivered over as prey to a Fury.

FROM A LETTER

Unexpectedly released, as it were, from prison, Kleist leapt into the anarchy of poesy. At length there was a possibility of being freed from his tensions; his fancy could devote itself to the shaping of imaginary characters, could indulge in a riot of words. But he could never find true enjoyment anywhere, because of his proclivity to excess. Hardly had he begun to write his first book when he aspired to become the greatest, the most splendid, the mightiest penman of the ages, and was even prepared to claim that his initial effort surpassed the finest works of the Greeks and of the classical masters of his own country. His conviction that he could reach the goal in one stride was transferred to the world of letters. Others had begun timidly, with hopes and dreams, with modest endeavours, and had been happy, as tyros, to produce a work of some merit. Kleist, living among superlatives, expected the instant attainment of the unattainable. *Robert Guiscard,* which he embarked upon immediately after finishing *The Schroffenstein Family,* was to be the most outstanding tragedy of all time. He was, in a flash, to rank with, nay, to outclass, the immortals. Unexampled in the history of literature is the audacity with which he expected to attain a supreme position in the world of letters before he had served his apprenticeship. Only now are we beginning to see how much arrogance was compressed within

the superheated chambers of his mind. If a Platen talks at large about writing *Odysseys* and *Iliads*, we know we are listening to the ravings of a weakling. But Kleist was in deadly earnest when he hoped to vie with the great masters; his ambition was a conflagration. Hurling defiance at the gods, he set himself to composing a play which (he gravely informed Wieland) was to give expression to "the spirits of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Shakespeare."

Kleist began his work in a spasm of energy, in a rapture of intoxication. With him, even creation was orgiastic. Delight and despair, groans and cries of joy, found expression in his letters. So enthralled was he by the alternatives of success or failure, that the approval of his friends, which encourages and invigorates other men of letters, was for him a new source of anxiety and longing. What brings happiness to others was for him a danger. "The opening of my poem, which is to disclose to the world your affection for me," he wrote to his sister, "arouses the admiration of all to whom I show it. If only I am able to finish it! God grant me this one wish, and then He can deal with me as He wills."

Thus he staked his life upon *Guiscard*. An anchorite upon his lonely islet in the Lake of Thun, plunged in the void of his own abyss, he wrestled with the daimon for freedom, even as Jacob wrestled with the angel. At one moment he rejoiced. "Soon I shall have something delightful to tell you, for I am approaching the climax of earthly happiness." The next, he was aghast at the recognition of what sinister spirits he had conjured up out of himself. "How deplorable is ambition! It poisons my joy." In the phases of depression he longed for death, and prayed that God would take him to Himself—to be overwhelmed, almost in the same breath, by the dread of dying before he had finished his work.

Robert Guiscard was to be something more than the

mere literary mirror of his inner self. The titanic figure of the great Norman adventurer was to represent the tragedy of Kleist's existence, the boundless cravings of the spirit of one whose body was weakened by unsuspected infirmities. The completion of his work would symbolize the taking of Byzantium, the attainment of world-empire, the realization of the dream of universal power, which the resolute conquistador was to win despite the flaws in his body and the reluctance of his people. Kleist longed to tear out the flames that consumed him; he wanted to escape from the daimon by hunting the hunter out of himself into an emblem, an image. For him, completion of his *Guiscard* would signify cure; victorious achievement would bring deliverance; ambition was the outcome of the impulse to self-preservation. That was why his nerves were twitching with eagerness, his every muscle tensed for the fray. It was a life-and-death struggle. His friends understood this when they advised him: "Finish *Guiscard* at any cost, though Caucasus and Atlas obstruct your path."

Never again did Kleist devote himself so unremittingly to a task. He wrote the tragedy, rewrote it, and rewrote it yet again, destroying his work each time as soon as it was finished. He knew it by heart, so that he could recite every word of it to Wieland. For months he would roll the massive and ponderous stone towards the hill-top, and then, baffled, would watch it rolling back into the valley below. The daimon had too firm a grasp for him to be able to free himself by one stupendous effort, as did Goethe in *Werther* and in *Clavigo*. Not thus, for Kleist, could the haunting spectre be laid. At length the pen dropped from his tired hand. "God knows, my darling Ulrike—and may He strike me with His wrath if this be not the unvarnished truth—that I would gladly give a drop of my blood for every letter of

a missive which I could open with the words, 'My poem is finished.' But I have attempted something beyond my strength. For half a thousand days, and for most of the nights as well, I have been striving from among so many garlands of fame to wrest one for our family. At length my guardian angel tells me to desist. . . . It would be crazy of me to continue the attempt to carry a burden which experience has shown me to be too heavy. I withdraw, leaving the field free for one who is yet to come, bowing my head in reverence before the spirit of him who will be born a millennium hence."

For a moment, indeed, it seemed as if Kleist were ready to accept the decree of fate, as if his intelligence would prove able to hold his feelings in leash. But his constitutional incapacity for moderation persisted; he could not maintain the heroic attitude of renunciation; his ambition, once awakened, could not be lulled back to sleep. His friends vainly endeavoured to soothe him in his despair, counselling change of scene, a journey to a brighter clime. What they had thought of as recreative travel became a senseless flight from place to place and from country to country, unavailing flight from gloomy thoughts. The failure of *Guiscard* was a dagger-thrust to his pride, and overweening arrogance was replaced by a gnawing sense of inferiority. The youthful dread of impotence recurred in a new form, being transferred from the life of sex to the realm of art. "My half-talents are the gift of hell, for heaven bestows all or nothing." To Kleist, the extremist, there were but two alternatives: eternal fame or nonentity.

Since eternal fame was denied him, he hurled himself into nullity, adopting the mad expedient of spiritual suicide (a more desperate choice than the bodily suicide of eight years later). Reaching Paris in the course of his headlong flight,

he burned the manuscript of *Robert Guiscard* together with other unfinished drafts, hoping thus to liberate himself from the tormenting desire for fame. Now his plan of life had once more been destroyed, and its destruction (as always with Kleist at such moments) was, so to say, a spell calling up a counterpart, the plan of death. Freed from the curse of ambition, simultaneously exultant and wretched, he penned what was perhaps the most wonderful letter ever written by an artist in the hour of failure: "My dear Ulrike, what I have to say to you will perhaps cost you your life, but I have no choice, no choice. In Paris I reread my work, so far as it was finished; found it wanting, and burned it. There is an end of the matter. Heaven denies me fame, the greatest of earth's gifts. Like an obstinate child, I reject any other gifts it may choose to offer. I cannot show myself worthy of your friendship, and yet I cannot live without that friendship. I shall therefore seek death. Be easy in your mind, dear one; the death shall be a noble death upon the battlefield. . . . I intend to enlist in the French army, which is about to be shipped across the Channel. The universal danger lours seaward, and I rejoice at the prospect of a glorious tomb." In sober truth, with darkened senses, he attempted to put this plan into execution, made his way to Boulogne, was then persuaded by a friend to return to Germany, where he spent the next few months under medical care at Mainz.

Thus ended Kleist's first artistic effort. He had tried at one clutch to wrench the daimon from his breast—unsuccessfully, inflicting on himself a terrible wound, and having left in his hands nothing more than a fragment, though one of the most magnificent ever penned by an imaginative writer. The only finished portion of this fragment is—symbolically enough—the scene in which Guiscard, iron-willed, overcomes his sufferings and his weaknesses. But

Byzantium is never reached, the work remains for ever incomplete. Nevertheless this tragical struggle was heroic. Only one who had an inferno raging within could have wrestled as Kleist wrestled with himself in the endeavour to produce the work.

THE URGE TO DRAMATIC WRITING

I sing because I must.
FROM A LETTER

WITH the destruction of his *Guiscard* the tortured man believed he had strangled the persecutor within himself. But ambition was not dead. The destruction of the manuscript had been as unmeaning an act as that of one who should fire at his image in a mirror. True, the menacing reflexion may be shivered into fragments; but since that is merely a wraith, the true double continues to lie in ambush. Kleist could no more renounce art than the morphinomaniac can wean himself from morphine. At length he had found a safety-valve; for a brief space he could discharge the overplus of his feelings, could lower the tension of his mind by allowing his fantasies free rein, could secure an outlet in poesy. Dimly aware that he was becoming enthralled by a new passion, he made an attempt to escape from its toils; but, suffering as he did from a congestion of the feelings, he could not dispense with the relief of this form of bloodletting. Besides, he had squandered his property, had ruined his chances of a military career, and his impulsive temperament made him revolt against official routine, so he was constrained to write for a livelihood, although "to pen books for money" seemed to him a martyrdom. Creative activity had become a material need; the daimon had assumed bodily shape, and entered with him into his works. The "plans" he so methodically drafted had been torn to tatters by the storms of

destiny. Henceforward he must submit to the blind will, to the folly and the wisdom, of his nature. Out of infinite torment men fashion the infinitely great.

Henceforward his art became an obsession. That accounts for the strangely coercive character of his plays, which remind the reader of the explosion of a shell. With the exception of *The Broken Pitcher* (which, written for a wager, is light in touch, though strong), they are outbreaks of feeling, expressions of the escape from the inferno of his soul. They have an intensely irritable tone, like the cry of a man able to draw breath freely after he has been on the verge of suffocation; they twang like an arrow from the bowstring as they are discharged from overstrained nerves; they are ejaculated (the reader must pardon the image, for it so aptly embodies the truth) like semen in the sexual orgasm. Only to a minor degree fertilized by the intelligence, no more than faintly tinctured by reason, naked and unashamed, they are spurted into the infinite by an unquenchable passion. Each of them condenses feeling to a superlative degree; each of them represents an explosion of the overwrought mind and of one which has blindly followed the promptings of instinct.

In *Guiscard* he spewed forth his Promethean ambition; in *Penthesilea* he gave violent expression to his sexual ardours; in *Hermannsschlacht* his animal ferocity found vent. All of them show the fever of the author's blood rather than the usual temperature of the environment. Even in the works that are less intimately representative of Kleist's ego, in his gentler writings such as *Käthchen von Heilbronn* and the short stories, we feel the vibration of his nerves and are aware of the swiftness of transition from epic intoxication to sobriety.

Wherever we follow Kleist, we find ourselves in the

sphere of magic, in a region where the affective life is intense though overshadowed by gloom—to be irradiated from time to time by lightning-flashes that pierce the sultry atmosphere. It is this coercive element, together with the sulphurous and fiery discharges, which make his dramas so strange and so splendid. Goethe's plays embody vital transformations, but no more than episodically; they are disburdenings, self-justifications, flight and release. They never have the explosive character of Kleist's, in which lava and scoriæ are vomited from the unconscious. This ejection upon the borderline betwixt life and death is what distinguishes Kleist's works on the one hand from those of Hebbel, which are thoughts in fancy dress, where the problems derive from the superficial strata of the intelligence; and on the other hand from those of Schiller, which are works of art, but untroubled by the primal needs and perils of existence. No other German writer has incorporated his own inmost being into his works to the same extent as Kleist, tearing out his vitals (as it were) to fashion them. Music alone among the arts is as volcanic, as compulsive, as self-revealing as Kleist's writings—and it was this kinship which exerted so powerful a charm upon Hugo Wolf (unique among musicians in the plumbing of hazardous depths) and which led him to give musical setting to the scourged passions of *Penthesilea*.

More than two thousand years ago, Aristotle demanded of tragic drama that it should "liberate from a dangerous emotion by vehement discharge." How splendidly does the compulsive trend in Kleist's plays comply with this canon! It is upon the epithets "dangerous" and "vehement" (ignored by French and by most German commentators) that the emphasis lies. Thus Aristotle's definition might have been penned with an eye to Kleist, for whose affects were

more "dangerous" than the latter's, whose discharges more "vehement"? Kleist was not, as was Schiller, an author who mastered the problems he mooted or solved, but one who was obsessed by them; and it was this constraint that they imposed on him which made his outbursts so violent and so convulsive. His creative work was not the outcome of a deliberate exteriorization; it resulted from a frenzied endeavour to escape from internal and almost fatal stresses. Every character in his plays feels, as the author himself felt, that the cross laid upon him is the one important thing in the world; each of them is the slave of his passions; each of them stakes the limit, hazards his very life. Whatever happens to Kleist, and therefore whatever happens to his dramatis personæ, cuts to the bone. His country's distresses, which for other authors are topics for fine writing; philosophy, which Goethe dallied with in a sceptical mood and so far as was requisite to his own spiritual growth; Eros and the sorrows of Psyche—to Kleist, all these became a fever, a mania, and placed him on the rack. Kleist's problems were not, like Schiller's, poetical fictions; they were personal tragedies, cruel realities, which gave his writings their unique atmosphere. The polar contrasts of his nature found vent in them. Because he himself was unable to take anything lightly, his Kohlhaas, his Homburg, and his Achilles had to wrestle with their counterparts; and because their struggles (like his own) were superhuman, he portrayed with supreme power man at war with destiny.

Nothing but tragic drama, could give adequate expression to the agonizing oppositions of Kleist's temperament. The epic vein lends itself to more conciliatory, more easy-going formulations; but tragedy demands meticulous finish, and was more accordant with the extravagance of his character. This became his chosen method of expression. Yet

"chosen" is not the apt word. He did not choose this method, but was driven to it. His passions, rather than the thinking Kleist, shaped his works. Nothing could be more fallacious than to suppose that he purposively elaborated what he wrote. Goethe spoke sarcastically of the "invisible theatre" for which these plays must have been composed. Now, for Kleist there did exist an invisible theatre, and it was the daimonic world which by forcible cleavage, by establishing diametrical oppositions, created such stresses as could not fail to shatter a concrete and visible stage. Their themes are too vast for the "boards." Kleist was never "practical," and to write with an eye to the necessities of dramatic production would have conflicted with the passionate unrest of his nature.

His themes and his conceptions are always casual and careless; the ties that bind the different parts of his work together are loose; his technique is hastily devised. Consequently, whenever his genius ceases to sustain him, he becomes stagy and melodramatic; lapsing, at times, into the mannerisms of third-rate comedy, of Mr. Crummles, of the pantomime. Then, of a sudden (like Shakespeare), he soars from clownish gambols to the sublimest altitudes. His topic is a pretext, is the clay he moulds; the essence of his work is that it is suffused with passion. Thus it is that he often succeeds in creating dramatic tension out of what seem the tritest, the clumsiest, the most adventitious means (*Käthchen von Heilbronn, The Schroffenstein Family*); and yet when his fervour is red-hot, when the stresses of his internal oppositions find vent, he attains to unexpected splendours.

The machinery is crude; the arrangements are faulty and trivial; slowly and by devious paths he finds his way to the heart of the conflicts he is describing: but thereupon,

with a vigour that is unrivalled, comes the discharge of pent-up feelings in a dramatic explosion. Before this can happen, he has had to mine to a great depth. Like Dostoeffsky, he needed tedious preparations, subtilized confusions, labyrinthine underways. In the opening of his plays (*The Broken Pitcher, Robert Guiscard, Penthesilea*), details and situations seem hopelessly thronged—as if he were massing the clouds from which alone the thunderstorm could burst. He loves this dark and oppressive atmosphere because it is that of his inmost being; because perplexed staging is accordant with that "confusion of the feelings" for which Goethe (who mastered the daimon instead of becoming its thrall) regarded Kleist with disdainful sympathy. Beyond question there underlay this enigmatic tendency to complicate and to hide, a masochist element, a perverse delight in torture, in spinning out the agony, in playing with his own and others' impatience. Kleist's dramas irritate before they bring relief to our strained feelings. Like the music of *Tristan and Isolde*, they luxuriate in monotony, in puzzling intimations, in ambiguities.

Guiscard is the only one of his dramatic works in which the curtain rings up on a plain disclosure of the whole position. All his other plays (*Homburg, Penthesilea, Hermannsschlacht*) begin in what seems an insufferably involved scenario; and then, out of these complications, the primal passions of the dramatis personæ burst forth and clash with the increasing violence of an avalanche. Often they are so overwhelming as to shatter the frail dramatic scheme designed as their container. Except in the case of *Homburg*, one always feels with Kleist that the characters have run away from their creator into some fourth-dimensional sphere beyond the range of his waking imagination. Whereas Shakespeare makes his figures do what he wills, manages his

problems according to his own discretion, Kleist's figures and Kleist's problems take the bit between their teeth. Each character becomes one of the irresponsible fiends called up by a magician's apprentice. Kleist is no more accountable for their doings than any of us is for words uttered in sleep, words which (uninhibited) reveal longings hidden from our conscious mind.

The form as well as the substance, the language no less than the thought-content, of Kleist's dramatic writing, are subject to like coercions, to the same dominance of unconscious passion over conscious intelligence and will. The wording of the plays is like the breathing of one who is greatly excited: sometimes the speech foams and splashes; sometimes it is bald and curt, for it comes in gasps, followed by unexpected silences. There are incessant contrasts and counterparts. From an exemplary terseness, monumental in its reserve, he passes abruptly to bombast and hyperbole. Now and again, in the latter phase, he may be successful for a time, manifesting the transient vigour of one with a bounding pulse, until the verse collapses like a pricked bubble. Never does he show complete mastery of his verbal technique; his sentences twist and wind till the reader wonders whether they will ever end; the lines do not flow into one another harmoniously, but effervesce irregularly with unbridled passion. That is why not one of his poems, except for the magical "Death Litany," is a masterpiece. It was only the imminence of death that made him musical.

Driver and driven, hunter and hunted, Kleist takes his place amid the figures of his own creation; and what renders his dramas so tragical is, not so much their animating ideas, that in them which is spiritually willed, nor yet their episodes and their details, as their vast and clouded horizons that stretch forth into the illimitable void. It is the agony of

a world which forms their substance. He carries the burdens of his fate with him into his writings; and the incurable wound in the breast of every one of his heroes is at the same time the gulf that severs in twain a universe divided against itself. Nietzsche, with a seer's insight, said of Kleist that he was occupied with that malady of nature for which no healing could be found, noting how often he spoke of the "infirmity of the world." It was this recognition of the universe as an insoluble enigma that gave Kleist his faculty as a tragic dramatist; for only one who regards it both as subject matter and as object of accusation can approach it both as debtor and as creditor, both as accuser and as judge, asserting the rights of individuals against the injustices of nature, which makes man so unfinished, so dismembered, so perpetually unsatisfied. Doubtless such a vision of the world is not that of those whose gaze is clear and untroubled. Of another thinker overshadowed by gloom, Arthur Schopenhauer, Goethe wrote in his album:

> If in your own worth you'd rejoice,
> To the world's worth uplift your voice.

Kleist, regarding the world as fundamentally tragical, could never (as did Goethe) "uplift his voice to its worth"; and for this very reason he could never "rejoice in his own worth." All the creatures of his fancy are destroyed because of his dissatisfaction with the cosmos; offspring of a tragedian, they never cease kicking against the pricks and running their heads against the impenetrable wall of fate. Goethe's conciliatoriness, his resignation to life as he found it were reflected in his characters, in the problems he mooted and in the solutions he found for them—with the result that the persons of his dramas never attained classical greatness, even when they wore the tragedian's gown and cothurnus.

Those that are cast in the most tragical mould (Faust and Tasso, for instance) find consolation for themselves, secure appeasement, and are "saved" from themselves, rescued from destruction. Goethe knew that genuine tragedy would disturb his equanimity, and he was too far-sighted to tolerate this disturbance. Kleist, on the other hand, was heroically unwise; he had the courage to plumb the depths; voluptuously he followed his dreams into the uttermost gulfs, knowing that they would drag him down to doom. Contemplating the world as a tragedy, he fashioned tragic dramas out of his world, and of these dramas his own life was the greatest tragedy of all.

WORLD AND TEMPERAMENT

Only in my own company can I be cheerful, for there alone can I be wholly genuine.

FROM A LETTER

KLEIST knew very little of reality, but was intimately acquainted with the essence of things. He lived apart from, nay, in enmity with, his own time and what should have been his own circle, understanding others' tepidity or others' kindliness no better than he understood his own stubbornness and exaggerations. His psychology was weaponless, perhaps blind, in face of common types, in face of ordinary phenomena; his clairvoyance began only when he had to deal with abnormal feelings, with persons dwelling in ultra-dimensional space. Only through his volcanic passions was he linked with the outer world. His isolation persisted except where human nature becomes unfathomable. Like many animals, he did not see clearly in the daylight, for his eyes could not serve him until he was in the twilight of the feelings, in the chiaroscuro of the heart. Nothing but the larval depths of man's nature seemed akin to the fires that glowed within him. There, in the eruptive chaos of the primal affects, his fierce metaphors embodied the insight of the seer; whereas at the upper levels of life, with its hard shell, with its superficial formalities, he established no contacts. Being too impatient to observe coolly, to experiment slowly and realistically, he fanned events to a glow as if in a smith's forge, taking no interest in any problems that could not be made red-hot. He never described people. All that

happened was that the daimon in him recognized its brother in them behind the veil of the earthly and was in tune with nature.

That is why his heroes lack balance, why they transcend the limitations of daily life, why they suffer from excess of passion. These unruly children of an unrestrained imagination seem to derive (as Goethe said of Penthesilea) from a generation peculiar to themselves; each of them exhibits Kleist's own traits, his unconciliatory disposition, bluntness, obstinacy, mulishness, immalleability. At the first glance we detect in them the mark of Cain, perceiving that they must either destroy or be destroyed. They have the same mingling of hot and cold, too much and too little, rut and shame, flux and retention; the stormful explosion of overcharged nerves. They produce unceasing disquiet in those towards whom they wish to show their love—and Kleist did this in his own intimates. An awesome fire flashes from their eyes. That is why they have never become popular heroes and heroines, thoroughly congenial to ordinary folk, heroes and heroines of the Robin Hood and Maid Marian type. Even Käthchen, whom one step nearer to the commonplace would have reduced to the level of such a heroine of the fair-booth, has a morbid element in her mind, an excessive disposition to self-sacrifice, which to common folk remains incomprehensible; and Hermann (Arminius), the national hero, has too much policy and hypocritical shrewdness (too much of the Talleyrand, in fact) to become a patriot's ideal.

Invariably the trivialism in Kleist's leading personalities, which might have sufficed to make them popular ideals, is tinctured by a drop or two of some perilous ingredient which estranges them from the folk. In Homburg, the Prussian officer, we have (splendidly true to life, but incompatible with the nimbus) the fear of death; in Penthesilea, the

Greek Queen of the Amazons, we have Bacchic lusts; in Wetter vom Strahl, a virile inclination to lay about him with a horsewhip; in Thusnelda, a grain or two of stupidity and of feminine vanity. They all rescue Kleist from the operatic-tenor, the Walter Scott, the twopence-coloured note, by something superhuman in their composition, which discloses itself shamelessly in their emotions as these thrust aside the stage trappings. Each of them has something eccentric, unexpected, disharmonious, atypical in his mental visage; each of them (save for figures that play to the gallery) has, like Shakespeare's dramatis personæ, some piquant trait. Just as Kleist is un-stagy as a playwright, so as a creator of types he is an anti-idealist. For idealization invariably arises either from a deliberate retouching or else from lack of insight. Kleist saw clearly, and detested pettiness of feeling. He was more likely to lack taste than to be trivial, to be stubborn and hyperbolical than saccharine. To him—the blunt, the acerb, the man of many trials, the man who had known suffering—gush was utterly uncongenial; with the result that he was deliberately unsentimental, and put the controls on at the point where, in commonplace authors, the romantic stop is pulled out. Especially was he reticent in his love-scenes, allowing his characters no words, nothing more than a blush, a stammer, a sigh, or an impassioned silence. The hero, to Kleist's way of thinking, must not make himself common. That is why Kleist's heroes (let us frankly admit it) have had only a literary success, whether in Germany or elsewhere; have never been able to get off the stage and into the hearts of the people. They can be accounted national only for a fancied German nation, being as theatrical as must necessarily be the figures of that "imaginary theatre" of which Kleist spoke to Goethe. They are inharmonious, incongruous; they share their creator's self-

will and unconciliatoriness and therefore each of them is a lonely figure. Kleist's dramas have no ties with those of his predecessors and successors; they neither inherited a style nor engendered one. Kleist was unique, and he lived in a unique world.

A unique world, for it did not belong to the epoch from 1790 to 1807; it did not bear the imprint either of Brandenburg or of Germany; it was not permeated by the spirit, by the breath, of classical literature, nor yet overshadowed by the Catholic twilight of Romanticism. His world was as remote and as timeless as himself, a Saturnian sphere, turning away from daylight and clarity. Kleist was interested in nature, in the world, as in man, only at that uttermost bourne where it grows daimonic; where the natural passes into the magical; where the mundane shades into the supramundane, transcending the limits of the customary and the probable; where (I might even say) it becomes monstrous, vicious, abnormal. In events, as in human beings, his interest is riveted only by deviations from the rule (the Marquise von O., the Beggar-Woman of Locarno, the earthquake in Chile); always, therefore, at moments when they seem to be breaking away from God's appointed orbits. He had been profoundly impressed by his reading of Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert's mystical *Night-Side of the Natural Sciences.* The twilit phenomena of somnambulism, sleepwalking, suggestion, and animal magnetism were welcome material for the working of his over-stimulated fantasy, which—inadequately directed towards the manifestations of human passion—busied itself with the mysterious forces of the cosmos, that they might make the entanglements of the creatures of his imagination yet more involved, confounding facts in order to confound feelings. Kleist was most at home in the peculiar, the eerie; in desolate regions where, amid

shadows and chasms, he could sense the presence of the daimon by whom he was so strangely allured, where he was not embarrassed and intimidated by the proximity of the commonplace—to him always uncongenial. Thus did he, ever lacking restraint, plunge deeper and deeper into the enigmas of nature. In the cosmos, as in the realm of feeling, he was incessantly searching for the superlative.

At the first glance there would seem to be a kinship, because of this revolt from the obvious and the trite, between Kleist and his contemporaries the Romanticists. Yet in truth a gulf yawns between them and him, between their partly deliberate and partly spontaneous superstition and devotion to fable, on the one hand, and his obsession with the fantastic and the abstruse, on the other. For the Romanticists, the cult of the "wonderful" was tantamount to a religion; whereas for Kleist, the strange, the inexplicable, was a malady of nature. Novalis luxuriated in his faith; Eichendorff and Tieck tried to resolve the harshnesses and contrarieties of life in playfulness and in music; but Kleist, avid of mystery, longed to grasp what was hidden by the veil of semblance, and to wallow in the luxury of extremes. With his coldly passionate, inexorable lead, he sounded the depths of obscurity. The more remarkable, the more outré, an occurrence, the more concretely did it stimulate him to relate it. Indeed, he took an uncanny pride in a sober relation of the incomprehensible, boring through stratum after stratum until he tapped the depths where the magical in nature and the daimonic in man are inexplicably wedded. In this respect he resembles Dostoeffsky more closely than does any other German writer. Kleist's figures, too, are burdened with all the morbid and exacerbated energies of the nerves; and these nerves are somewhere and somehow painfully interconnected with the daimonic elements of the cosmos.

Like Dostoeffsky, Kleist is not only sincere, but sincere to a fault, and that is why the "atmosphere" of his writings is often obscured by a blight—the chill clarity of the intelligence being suddenly replaced by the sultry obscurity of fantasy and troubled by windy outbursts of passion. Kleist's spiritual atmosphere is often exhilarating. He has a profound insight into essentials, profounder maybe than that of any other German imaginative writer. Yet the air he makes us breathe is irrespirable for long (he himself could endure it for only a decade), since it tenses the nerves unduly, tormenting our senses with its crude contrasts of heat and cold, and making repose impossible. Even as an artist this man, cloven in sunder, was homeless. There was no solid ground beneath the rolling wheels of his perpetual flight. He lived in the realm of the wonderful without believing in it, and he created realities while having no love for them.

THE TELLER OF TALES

> *The quality of true form lies herein, that the spirit momentarily and directly emerges from it; whereas defective form holds the spirit prisoned like a badly made mirror, and discloses nothing but itself.*
>
> LETTER FROM ONE POET TO ANOTHER

KLEIST's mind dwelt in two worlds: in the torrid zones of fancy, and in the sober, cold, and concrete region of analysis. That was why his art was bifid, pushing in either direction to an extreme. Kleist the playwright and Kleist the teller of tales have often been treated as one, or the teller of tales has been regarded as a variant of the dramatist. In reality, however, the two forms of literary art were for him contrasted expressions of the ambivalence of his temperament. As playwright, he seized his material without restraint, and heated it red-hot in his fires; as writer of nouvelles, he put the curb on his participation, held scrupulously aloof, so that none of the breath of his own life should inspire the narration. In his dramas it was himself that he was fanning into flame, but in his novels it was others, his readers, whom he wished to render ardent; in his plays he spurred himself forward, in his stories he reined himself back. Both these modes, stimulation and restraint, were pushed to an extreme. His plays are the most subjective, the must surgent, the most eruptive known to the German stage; his tales are the baldest, the chilliest, the most terse among German epics. Always the superlative!

In his novels, Kleist excluded his ego, suppressed his passions, or (rather) switched them onto a different track. For we are not at the end of Kleist's exaggerations. He stressed this self-exclusion to reach a climax of objectivity which imperilled his art—but risk was his chosen element. Never again has German literature achieved so ostensibly tranquil a narrative method, such masterly objectivity, as in Kleist's seven nouvelles and short stories, so that only in one respect, perhaps, do they lack perfection—that of naturalness. We feel that his lips are tightly compressed, lest a sigh should betray the torment of his soul; we are aware that the hands are rigidly withheld from gestures, that the whole man is being forcibly repressed in order to remain "objective."

Compare Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*, their cheerful and frivolous deceit, their guttersnipe playing at hide-and-seek, with Kleist's strained and laboured technique, which pushes sobriety to excess and talks to the reader through clenched teeth. Wanting to be cool, he becomes ice-bound; wanting to talk softly, he grows constrained; aspiring towards a Latin, a Tacitean brevity, he writes in a style that is unduly compressed. Whether it be to the right or to the left, Kleist oversteps reasonable limits.

He did not (after the manner of Hölderlin, Novalis, and Goethe) use the German language as if it were a harp, but as if it were a trenchant weapon, or a plough. With his unwieldy tongue he related the most burning, the most moving, the most unquiet of topics; his Protestant sobriety and clarity wrestled with the most fantastic of problems. He wrapped his subject in enigmas, entangling the threads of the narration arbitrarily so that he might perplex and alarm his readers, only to cut loose from the tangle a moment before it would be too late. One who fails to understand that

it is Kleist's fiendish delight to force others to accompany him into a region of intense sensations, into a domain of horror and of peril, may well regard as fanatical self-violation the technique which is in truth the obverse of profound passion.

Through repression, Kleist betrayed all that was not good, all that was hidden away out of sight; betrayed them because calm and self-mastery were alien to his temperament. Absolute freedom (the artist's supreme magic) was lacking to him when he wished to impose upon himself a tranquillity foreign to his nature.

Yet how much, after all, does his will achieve! The daimon enabled him, in these novels, to transfuse living blood into the arteries of speech. We feel this mastery most of all in haphazard fragments, in purposeless writings, in the trifling anecdotes and episodes which he wrote as "fillers" for his newspaper. Here his will was unfettered, so that he worked easily and without artifice. With plastic skill he would give imperishable form to twenty lines of a police report, to an account of a cavalry skirmish during the Seven Years War. Here the factual lucidity is perfect. In the longer tales, on the other hand, the effort towards objectivity is always conspicuous. Kleist's passion for complexity and distortion, his mania for undue condensation, his delight in mystery make them stimulating rather than restful. Indeed their apparent coolness renders them heating, disturbing, so that "Die Marquise von O." (an eight-line anecdote from Montaigne) as a charade, or "The Beggar-Woman of Locarno," produces the impression of a nightmare. The tormenting effect of these dreams is all the greater because the figures are not presented in dream-fashion before the inner vision, confusedly or in chiaro-

scuro; they disclose themselves in sharp outline, simultaneously material and spectral.

Just as Stendhal had a penchant for writing cold, non-metaphorical, anti-sentimental prose, and daily read a chapter or two of the Civil Code to get the frigid, matter-of-fact atmosphere he wanted, so did Kleist take the chroniclers as his exemplars. But whereas with Stendhal this was a matter of technique, with Kleist there ensued a passion for dispassionateness, with the result that his own tensions were transferred to his readers. Always we feel the excess which was natural to him, and for this reason the ablest and strongest of his stories is the one which was an appropriate embodiment of the motive force of his own personality—"Michael Kohlhaas," the most splendid, most symbolical type Kleist ever created; the man whose forces are destroyed by lack of control, the man in whom level-headedness degenerates into obstinacy, and a craving for justice into litigiousness. Kohlhaas (though Kleist probably was not aware of it) was the emblem of his creator, one whose best qualities became his greatest peril, and who was pushed over the edge by the fanaticism of his will. When he would be disciplined, when he would exercise restraint, Kleist was as immoderate as when he gave his passions rein.

Most effectively, as I have said, is this contradiction manifested in those little anecdotes he wrote without artistic aim, and also in those superb creations of an eccentric, his letters. No other German imaginative writer has disclosed himself so wantonly to the world as did Kleist in the few of his letters that have come down to us. I should not dream of comparing them with the psychological documents left by Goethe and Schiller; for Kleist, in his inviolable sincerity, was enormously bolder, freer from inhibitions, profounder,

and more unconditioned than were the two great masters of German classical literature who, in their letters, remained stylists and æsthetes, unconsciously posing before the camera of futurity. Kleist at the confessional was still an extremist; his pitiless self-analysis was pleasurably tinged; he had not merely love but a sort of lust for the truth, and there was an element of ecstasy even in the climax of his pain.

What could be more poignant than the cries of this heart, which come to us as if from an immeasurable height, like the agonized scream of a wounded bird of prey? What could be more awe-inspiring than the heroic pathos of his solitary plaint? We seem to be listening to the lament of Philoctetes, alone in the island of the spirit, railing at the gods who are torturing him. When, in the agony of self-knowledge, Kleist rends the clothing from his body, he stands naked before us, bleeding, scarred, like one just escaped from a combat. We hear the groans of a lacerated god, of a mutilated beast, mingled with words that dazzle us with the clear light of their intelligence. His letters more than any other of his writings contain the whole man, his mingled brevity and exuberance, ecstasy and analysis, discipline and passion, modernity and primitiveness. It may well be that his *Geschichte meines Innern* (*History of My Mind*) gave unified expression to all these flames and lightning-flashes; but this work, which must certainly have been fanatically truthful, and not a mere compromise between fact and fancy like Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, has not been preserved. In this case as in others fate has imposed silence upon him, has forbidden the "inexpressibly human" in him to disclose its inmost secrets. Thus we can know him only as overshadowed by his daimon, and not as he was in his ultimate solitude.

LAST TIE

The sense of justice triumphs over all.
THE SCHROFFENSTEIN FAMILY

In every one of his plays Kleist was a self-betrayer; in each of them the molten lava of his soul erupted into the outer world, giving objective shape to his passion. Through them, therefore, we can gain a partial acquaintance with the contradictions of his nature; but he would not have become one of the immortals, his personality fully disclosed, had he not been able in the last of his works to give a picture of himself and his limitations. In this posthumous drama, *The Prince of Homburg*, he depicted (with that outstanding genius which fate rarely grants to an artist more than once in his life) himself, the conflict that had always raged in him, the tragic antinomy of passion and discipline. In *Penthesilea*, in *Guiscard*, in *Die Hermannsschlacht*, one impulse dominated, an urge towards the infinite. In *Homburg* the interplay of impulses finds expression—pressure and resistance in which neither is victorious, but in which counterpoise and suspense ensue. Now, what is suspense of the energies other than the most perfect harmony?

Nothing can be more artistic than the depiction of those beautiful moments in which the immoderate is tempered to moderation; in which, during the flicker of an eyelash, discord is resolved into harmony; in which, after seemingly hopeless estrangement, the fiercest oppositions are stilled, and transiently embrace one another with love. The more savage the previous conflict, the wider the antecedent sever-

ance, the more sublime is the concord of the meeting streams. Kleist's *Homburg* is unrivalled among German plays in respect of this release from tension. Thus the most spiritually perturbed of German playwrights, just before committing suicide, gave his nation its finest tragedy, even as Hölderlin, when the darkness was about to obscure his intelligence for ever, penned the Orphic hymns that sound through the wide world; even as Nietzsche, when his mind was on the verge of disintegration, uttered his most inspired, his most sparkling words. The magical working of this sense of imminent destruction is incomprehensible, as inexplicably beautiful as the last uprush of blue flames from a dying fire.

In *Homburg* Kleist gained control over the daimon for an instant, ridding himself of the haunter by incorporating him into the written work. He did not—as in *Penthesilea*, in *Guiscard*, in *Die Hermannsschlacht*—merely cut off one head of the hydra whose tentacles entwined him. Seizing the monster in an irresistible grip, he embodied it wholly in his creation. Here, then, we feel his power, because force is not dissipated in the void, because passion does not hiss aimlessly like the steam escaping through the safety-valve of a superheated boiler, but energy wrestles with energy. Nothing runs to waste in *Homburg*. Kleist found deliverance through a restraint which brought redoublement. The opposing forces are no longer destructive, inasmuch as they no longer leave outlets for this or that unregulated impulse. The antinomy of his nature has been made clear to him through the writing of his own work. But clarity brings knowledge, and knowledge ensures atonement. The passion and the discipline of his soul cease to strive against each other, and look each other quietly in the face. Discipline (in the person of the Elector, who has Homburg proclaimed as

victor in the church) honours passion; and passion (in the person of Homburg, who asks for his own death-sentence) honours normality. Each recognizes the other as part of the eternal Power, which demands unrest for the sake of movement, while demanding discipline for the sake of order; and inasmuch as Kleist tears his earthly opposite out of his troubled breast and discloses him beneath the stars, Kleist himself for the first time is delivered from solitude to become joint creator of the world.

As if by magic, whatever the author had hitherto striven to achieve, was now achieved in a purified and sublimer form, tranquillized and appeased by the sense of atonement. The passions of thirty years were limned, no longer with masterful exaggeration, but mollified and clarified. Guiscard's crazy ambition had, in Homburg the hero of the play, been transformed into a youth's natural ardour for action; the crude and brutish, the bludgeon-swinging and barbarous patriotism of *Die Hermannsschlacht* had become a gentle yet virile love of one's native land; Kohlhaas's disputatiousness and cantankerousness had been humanized into the Elector's clear-sighted respect for the law; the charm of *Käthchen von Heilbronn* shone gently upon the garden scene, where death was but a sweet scent wafted from the other world; and Penthesilea's passion, her greed of life, had ebbed to be no more than a peaceful yearning.

For the first time there emanates from Kleist's work a muted tone of kindliness, an aroma of sympathy; as he fingers his harp, we hear what we have never heard before in his melodies, the notes of the silver strings. There is a gathering together of every variant of human motives. Just as it is sometimes said of the dying (especially of those who die by drowning) that their last thoughts are a condensed recapitulation of a lifetime's memories, so does Kleist's

whole past, a seemingly misspent existence, sketch itself here in outline, sketch itself so dexterously that his errors, his omissions, his follies, and his futilities, are seen to have significance. The Kantian philosophy, which at twenty he had taken so much to heart that it had almost crushed him by imposing on him his "plan of life," so skilfully guides the Elector in the choice of words that he who would otherwise have been a mere crowned puppet is spiritualized. The years spent as a cadet, the military training (which Kleist had cursed again and again while experiencing them) are re-created in the magnificent fresco of the army, which is a glorification of fellowship. Everything he had broken away from—tradition, discipline, the era to which he belonged—now became the sky that arched his work, for at length he was producing out of an inward home, out of the determinative essence of his self. The air is no longer sultry; the nervous tensions of the author no longer distress the reader; the verses are unconstrained and musical. The spirit world, which elsewhere in his writings seems as though it were spewed forth from hell, here hovers twilit over the interplay of the mortal figures. With a sweetness echoing that of Shakespeare's last plays, serene knowledge and assured deliverance, the curtain falls upon a harmonious universe.

The Prince of Homburg is the sincerest of Kleist's dramas because it embodies the totality of his life. The criss-crossings and complications of his temperament are there: his love of life and his craving for death, his discipline and his indiscipline, his heritage and his acquirements. Only here, where he pours himself out so freely, and drains himself to the dregs, does he, unconsciously, become perfectly genuine. Hence the prophetic note in the death-scene, the intoxication of a voluntary end, the dread of an impending fate—a

vaticination of his suicide and a simultaneous and integral reliving of his earlier life. Only those consecrated to death have this sublime insight, this twofold vision into the past and the future. Among German dramas, none but *Homburg* and *Empedocles* have sounding through them this elfin music, ringing into the infinite. For nothing but ultimate need can melt the soul in its crucible; nothing but resignation can attain that distant sphere which passion has failed to reach. What destiny had stubbornly denied to Kleist's covetous grasp and to his fierce onslaught, she now vouchsafed in the hour when he had ceased to hope—perfection.

A PASSION FOR DEATH

The uttermost which human strength can try
Have I now tried—th'impossible essayed.
I staked my all upon a single cast.
The die decisive lies before my eyes.
I look, I look—and know that I have lost.

PENTHESILEA

It was significant for Kleist that at the very time when he had attained a mastery of his craft, in the year when *Homburg* was written, he should also have been more lonely than ever before. He was forgotten by the world, was homeless and aimless. He had resigned his official post, had been deprived of his newspaper, and had had no success in what he conceived to be his mission of summoning Prussia to take sides with Austria in the war. His arch-foe Napoleon held sway over a submissive Europe; the king of Prussia, who had been the emperor's vassal, had become an ally. Kleist's plays were refused by manager after manager, or if performed were coldly received; his books were rejected by the publishers; he could not regain even a minor position in the public service. Goethe was estranged from him; other noted men of letters scarcely knew his name or regarded him as of no account; his former patrons ignored him and his friends neglected him. Even the most faithful of his intimates, his "once so Pylades-minded sister" Ulrike, had forsaken him. He had played card after card in vain, and now his highest trump, *The Prince of Homburg*, was left useless in his hands, the manuscript was of no avail to him.

He had scarcely an acquaintance left, and no one regarded his writings as of the slightest value.

At length he attempted a reconciliation with his family, turning up after being lost to their ken for months. He appeared at Frankfurt an der Oder, hoping to have his heart quickened by some signs of affection, but his relatives sprinkled salt on his wounds and smeared gall on his lips. Every dinner he ate with the Kleists was a renewed affliction to him, for they regarded him with contempt as a cashiered official, an unsuccessful newspaper editor, an incompetent playwright. He was a poor relation who did them no credit.

"I would rather die ten deaths," he wrote in his despair, "than endure once again what I endured the last time I sat at the family board in Frankfurt." Rejected by his kin, he was thrust back upon himself, thrust back into the hell within his own breast. Gloomy, ashamed, humiliated, he made his way to Berlin. For a few months, down at heels and out at elbows, he carried on there as best he could, begging the authorities for a job, fruitlessly offering his novel, his *Homburg*, his *Hermannsschlacht* to one publisher after another, afflicting his friends by his pitiable aspect. At length they grew weary of him, just as he had grown weary of the hunt for work or a market for his literary wares. "My heart is so sore," he said towards the close of this period, "that I might almost say the daylight hurts my nose whenever I stick it out of the window." His passions had cooled, his strength was spent, his hopes were dashed.

> His fruitless cry the ears of all ignore,
> And, when he sees the banner of the times
> A-flutter as it spreads from door to door,
> He ends his song, to sing has no desire,
> But sadly, sadly, lays aside his lyre.

Then the silence (perhaps the silence that surrounded Nietzsche is the only parallel in the case of a man of such outstanding literary genius) was broken by an obscure voice from within, by a voice which he had heard ever and again in moments of discouragement and despair, a voice telling him that a voluntary death offered the best way of escape. He had known its lure since early youth. Just as when he was no more than a hobbledehoy he had formulated his plan of life, so likewise had he long since formulated his plan of death. Again and again had the idea taken shape in hours of impotence; it thrust itself upwards like a dark rock in a raging tide whenever his passions and his hopes ebbed.

Innumerable were the occasions when, in Kleist's writings and conversations, this ardour for life's end found vent. One could almost venture the paradox of saying that he could endure life only so long as he was ready, from moment to moment, to fling it away. Always he craved for death, and if his suicide was so long delayed this was not through fear, but only because of his temperamental exaggeration. Whatever he wanted, he wanted in excess; so for him even a death self-chosen must come in a moment of exaltation. He did not wish to slay himself in a petty or cowardly fashion. As he declared in that letter to Ulrike, he yearned for "a splendid death." Even this gloomiest, most appalling of thoughts was voluptuously tinged.

He wished to hurl himself into death as onto a huge nuptial couch. His erotic trends, which never found normal outlet, overflowed in the dark corners of his nature; and thus it was that he came to picture to himself as a mystical love-death, as the annihilation of twin souls, this death he was ardently to embrace. A deep-rooted and primal anxiety (which he immortalized in the death-scene of *The Prince of Homburg*) made him, who had had such bitter experi-

ence of loneliness, dread the continuance of this fearful solitude into the eternity of death. Hence, from childhood onwards, it had been his ecstatic way to beseech anyone he loved to die with him. The man of all men most keenly in love with life yearned for a love-death. In earthly existence no woman could satisfy his demand for the superlative, none could keep pace with his vehemence; none, not his betrothed, not Ulrike, not Marie von Kleist, could comply with his claims. Only death, not to be outbid, could gratify his insistence upon an unrivalled proof of life; and *Penthesilea* disclosed the man's secret ardours. The woman who would die with him was the only woman he really desired, and (as in his farewell letter he announced with jubilation) "her tomb was dearer to him than the beds of all the empresses in the world." That was why he had continually adjured those he had been fond of to accompany him into the land of darkness.

Caroline von Schlegel, with whom he had no more than a passing acquaintance, was informed of his willingness to shoot her and himself. Flatteringly, passionately, he told his friend Rühle: "I cannot rid myself of the idea that we must still do something together. Let's do something fine, and die in the doing of it. One of the millions of deaths we have already died and shall die in days to come. It's just like going out of one room into another. . . ." As always with Kleist, thought was richly suffused with emotion, till it grew ecstatic. More and more did he become obsessed with the idea of putting a term to the decay of his energies, with the notion of an irrevocable and heroic act of self-destruction. Thus, amid a flourish of the trumpets of his own admiration for what he was doing, he would escape from the pitiful restrictions and inadequacies of an existence in which his feelings were starved, he would escape into a

glorious death. His daimon quivered at the prospect of at length achieving reunion with the infinite.

Like every other of his hyperbolical affects, Kleist's passion for a fellowship on which a joint suicide could alone put the seal remained a mystery to his friends. Vainly did he seek a companion into the Valley of the Shadow. One and all they contemptuously or shudderingly rejected the proposal. At length, at the very time when his soul was surcharged with bitterness and disgust, when his spirit was darkened, he encountered a woman, hitherto almost a stranger, who thanked him for his strange invitation. She was an invalid, whose death could not in any case be long delayed, for her body was inwardly devoured by cancer even as Kleist's mind was devoured by weariness of life. Though herself incapable of forming a vigorous resolution, she was sensitive and highly suggestible, and therefore open to the promptings of his morbid enthusiasm; she agreed to plunge with him into the unknown.

He had found one who would deliver him from solitude in the supreme moment of that plunge. There ensued that strange bridal night of the pair who did not love one another. The elderly, mortally sick, and ugly woman (whose face was transfigured for him by the violence of his own feelings) agreed to travel with him into the void. At bottom this somewhat priggish and sentimental wife of a tax-collector was of a type uncongenial to Kleist. One may suppose, indeed, that in the sexual sense he never even regarded her as a woman, but that he wedded her under another star, a different sign, in the sacred priestcraft of death. She who would have been too petty, too soft, too weak for him as a living companion, was welcomed by him as a comrade in death, for she was the only creature who would surround his departure with a spurious afterglow

of love and fellowship. He offered himself to her; she had merely to accept him, for he was ready to go with her.

Life had made him ready, too ready; it had trodden him underfoot, enslaved, disillusioned, and humiliated him. Nevertheless he stood erect once more, and out of his impending death constructed his last heroic tragedy. The artist in him, the undying exaggerator, fanned the embers of resolution into a mighty flame. Joyance blazed forth from him at last, now that his voluntary death was assured, now that (as he phrased it) he had "ripened for death," now that he knew himself to be, not life's thrall, but life's master. He who had never, as had Goethe, been able heartily to accept life was able gladly and of set purpose to accept death. For the first time the notes of his song became perfectly harmonious. Like the ringing of a pure-toned bell, every word sounded forth clear beneath the hammer-blows of destiny. His days were no longer full of sorrow. He drew deep breaths of relief; the tensions of his spirit were relaxed, since he contemplated being merged into the infinite; the tribulations of everyday life could be ignored now that his world glowed with an inner light. His ego was at length a delight to him, and the delight found expression in Homburg's utterance when destruction was at hand:

> Now art thou wholly mine, O Immortality,
> And through the bandage covering my eyes
> There shines the radiance of a thousand suns!
> Lo, from my shoulders twain do pinions grow;
> Athwart ethereal spaces soars my soul;
> And as a ship, before a favouring wind,
> Sees the coast drop behind the horizon's marge,
> So fades all life and sinks from out my gaze.
> A moment still its tints and shapes I see;
> A moment more, they've vanished in the brume.

THE MUSIC OF DESTRUCTION

Not every blow, I think, should man endure.
Let him whom God has stricken drop his sword.

THE SCHROFFENSTEIN FAMILY

OTHER imaginative writers have lived more finely, have rowed with a longer stroke, have been in closer touch with life, furthering by their own existence, and transforming thereby, the destinies of the world. None has died more splendidly than Kleist. Of all deaths, none was ever so enveloped in music as his, none so marked by an exhilarating impetus. "The most distressful life that any mortal has lived" (*Death Letters*) ended as a Dionysiac sacrificial feast. The heroic end was successfully achieved by the obscure workings of that spirit which in the ordinary affairs of life had made so lamentable a mess of things. Many (Socrates, for instance, and André Chénier) have displayed in the closing moment of their lives a moderato of feeling; a stoical, nay, humorous indifference; have accepted death wisely and uncomplainingly. But Kleist made a passion of death itself—an intoxication, an orgy, an ecstasy. His passing was a joyful self-surrender, such as he had never known before. Singing like a bacchant, he strode forward to his doom.

Only this once was Kleist's spirit freed; for the first time was his voice unconstrainedly joyful. No one but his companion in death saw him during these farewell days, but we feel assured that his countenance must have disclosed

the rapture welling up from within. As far as the pen was concerned, he excelled anything he had written in the past. His *Death Letters* are, to my way of thinking, the most perfect of his works, challenging Nietzsche's *Dionysus-Dithyrambs* and Hölderlin's *Songs of the Night*. We hear in them strains from unknown worlds, where there is no taint of our sublunary sphere. Music, for which he had had so great a fondness, but which he had deliberately kept out of his verses, found renewed expression, so that what he now wrote overflowed with rhythm and melody. In these days he penned his only true poem, the "Death Litany"—obscure, tinged with sunset lights, half a stammer and half a prayer, but magical beyond the understanding of the sober senses. The stubbornness, the harshness, the acerbity, the intellectualism, the ultra-sobriety hitherto characteristic of his efforts, has here been resolved in music; his Prussian stringency has been relaxed in melody. The earthly no longer has him in its grip.

Thus soaring to a great height, "like two happy air-navigators" he writes in his *Death Letters*, he looks down once more on the world and parts from it without bitterness. Why should he feel bitter? Everything that had hitherto troubled him seemed remote and meaningless now that he contemplated it from infinity. Although another woman swore to be his companion in death, his thoughts turned to her for whom he had lived and whom he loved, to Marie von Kleist. He wrote her a farewell greeting from his inmost soul. Once again he embraced her in the spirit, but with the self-possession and moderation of one who has set forth on his voyage into eternity. Then he wrote to his sister Ulrike. As regards her, the shame he had endured still rankles, and his words ring harsh. A few hours later, however, he grew aware that he had been unjust, amid the

beatitude of his chosen end, to mortify her; so he wrote a second time, affectionately and full of forgiveness, to the sister of whom he had once been so fond, sending her his best, his very best wishes. As for these latter, the loveliest thing Kleist can wish for her is worded as follows: "May heaven grant you a death even half as joyful and ineffably serene as mine."

Order has been established; the man who has ever been restless has at last found peace. Most unexpected, most improbable of happenings, Kleist, whose every tie had been severed, feels himself linked up with the world. The daimon, his purpose achieved, no longer has power to goad his victim. Kleist, impatient to get away, flutters his manuscripts once again. There is a finished novel; there are a couple of plays; there is the story of his inner life. No one wants them; no one knows or shall know them. Even the spur of ambition has ceased to operate. Relentlessly he burns the papers, among them the *Homburg*, which was saved for posterity through the chance survival of a forgotten transcript. Posthumous fame, a literary reputation which may endure for a few centuries, what do these matter to one setting forth into unnumbered æons? There remain some trifles to attend to; they are dealt with carefully and sensibly, in a way which shows that the would-be suicide was perfectly clear in his mind, untroubled by dread or any other passion. Peguilhen is to see to the sending of a few letters, and to settle outstanding debts, enumerated to the last pfennig, for Kleist remains conscientious to the end. Probably no farewell letter was ever penned more matter of fact than that missive to the War Office: "We shall be found lying shot on the Potsdam road," he begins, as coolly as if these were the opening words of one of his nouvelles; and, as in his nouvelles, the account of an unprecedented

death is limned with amazing plasticity and clearness. Nor is there any other farewell letter so permeated with the daimonism of exuberance as that to his beloved Marie von Kleist. In his last hour we still discern the ambivalence of his life, its restraint and its unrestraint, both on the heroic plane.

His signature is the line drawn beneath the account of all that life still owes him. He writes it firmly. Now the complicated balance-sheet has been drawn up, and the creditor is about to cancel the obligation, to tear up the bond. In the high spirits of honeymooners, the couple drive to the Wannsee. The host at the inn hears them laughing, sees them sporting merrily in the fields, can tell how they drank their coffee with gusto in the open air. Then, at the prearranged hour, came the two pistol shots, in swift succession, the first that with which Kleist pierced his companion's heart, the second that with which (barrel in mouth) he blew out his own brains. His hand did not falter. It was true that he knew better how to die than to live.

Kleist's personal fate and his atmosphere were integral parts of his work. Foolish to me, therefore, seems the question, to what heights he might have raised German tragedy had he not perished prematurely by his own hand. He acted according to his nature, and if his *Homburg* was a masterpiece, so likewise was his suicide. Side by side with those mighty ones who are (as was Goethe) masters of life, there must now and again arise one who is master of death, and who, out of death, creates a poem. "Often a good death is the most fitting close to a career." Unhappy Günther, who wrote the foregoing, did not know how to seek and find a good death; he lapsed to lower and yet lower levels of misfortune until he flickered out like a farthing rushlight.

Kleist, on the other hand, master of the art of tragedy, fashioned his sorrows into the imperishable memorial of his own end; and all suffering grows symbolical when it enjoys the privilege of creation.

A philosopher counts, in my estimation, only in so far as he is able to set an example.

THOUGHTS OUT OF SEASON

Nietzsche

1844–1900

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A ONE-MAN DRAMA

To get the best out of life, we need to live dangerously.

The tragedy of Friedrich Nietzsche's life was that it happened to be a one-man show, a monodrama wherein no other actor entered upon the stage. As the acts of the play precipitate themselves like an avalanche before our eyes, the solitary fighter stands alone beneath the louring skies of destiny: not a soul is at his side to succour him; no woman is there to soften by her ever-present sympathy the stresses of the atmosphere. Every action takes its birth in him, and its repercussions are felt by him alone. The few figures which, at the outset, creep by in the shadow of his person, accompany his heroic enterprise with gestures of dumb astonishment and fear; soon they glide away and vanish as if faced by some danger. Not one person ventures to enter wholeheartedly into the innermost sanctum of Nietzsche's destiny; the poet-philosopher is doomed to speak, to struggle, to suffer alone. He converses with no one, and no one has anything to say to him. What is even more terrible is that none hearken to his voice.

In this unique tragedy, Friedrich Nietzsche had neither fellow-actors nor audience, neither stage nor scenery nor costume; the drama ran its course in the spaceless realm of thought. Basel, Naumburg, Nice, Sorrento, Sils-Maria, Genoa, and so forth are so many names serving as milestones on his life's road; they were never abiding-places, never a home. The scene having once been set, it remained

the same till the curtain was rung down; it was composed of isolation, of solitude, of that agonizing loneliness which Nietzsche's own thoughts gathered around him and with which he was entrapped as by an impenetrable bell-glass, a solitude wherein there were no flowers or colours or music or beasts or men, a solitude whence even God was excluded, the dead and petrified solitude of some primeval world which existed long ago or may come into being æons hence. What made the emptiness and sadness of this isolation so horrible, and at the same time so ludicrous, was the fact that it existed, intellectually speaking, in the very heart of a new Germany filled with the rattle of trains, with telegraph wires, with the roar and thunder of machinery, in the heart of a civilization whose members suffered from an almost morbid curiosity, whose publishing-houses swamped the market every year with forty thousand volumes of printed matter, whose professors and students were daily endeavouring to solve innumerable problems, whose theatres were night after night staging a hundred different tragedies, while divining nothing, feeling nothing of the tremendous mental drama unfolding itself in their very midst.

For it was precisely when the tragedy of Friedrich Nietzsche reached its sublimest moments that the German world failed to provide either an audience, a spectator, or a witness of what was taking place. At first, while he was professor at Basel University and could speak his mind from the professorial chair, and while Wagner's friendship thrust him into the limelight, Nietzsche's words drew attentive listeners; but the more he delved into his own mind, the more he plunged into the depths of time, the less did he find responsive echoes. One by one his friends, and even strangers, rose to their feet and withdrew affrighted at the sound of his monologue, which became wilder and more

ecstatic as the philosopher warmed to his task. Thus was he left terribly alone, upon the stage of his fate. Gradually the solitary actor grew disquieted by the fact that he was talking into the void; he raised his voice, shouted, gesticulated, hoping to find a response even if it were no better than a contradiction. He invented a special music to accompany his words, an intoxicating, Dionysian music; but no one heard his minstrelsy. He tried to be blithe and gay, but his mirth was forced, and piercing to the ear; he gave his sentences twists and turns, hoping that these antics would attract disciples to listen to his deadly earnest evangel, but not a hand was raised to applaud him. Then he invented a dance, a dance betwixt crossed swords, and, stabbed and bleeding, he practised his new art before a public which had no inkling of what such pleasantries were meant to convey, nor did any suspect the mortally injured passion that lay concealed beneath his strident levity. Thus the drama was played to a finish before empty seats, and no one guessed that the mightiest tragedy of the nineteenth century was unrolling itself before men's eyes. Unwitnessed were the last gyrations of his thoughts as they spun upon a dizzy mountain peak, and, with one final and magnificent whirl, tumbled to earth exhausted, "dead before immortality."

Such was Friedrich Nietzsche's tragedy, and it had its roots in his utter loneliness. Unexampled was the way in which an inordinate wealth of thought and feeling confronted a world monstrously void and impenetrably silent. Not even an adversary worthy of his steel was vouchsafed him. His indomitable will-to-think had to fall back upon his personal resources; for nowhere but in his own breast could he find answer, and meet with resistance. His all-consuming ardour of thought clung to him like a Nessus shirt, and in order to divest himself of it he tore away strips of his own

burning flesh, to stand bared before the ultimate truth, before himself. Icy airs blew upon his nakedness; the cry of his spirit met with a stony silence; the leaden skies sank low above the head of this "murderer of God" who, since no opponent was forthcoming, proceeded to attack himself, "a self-slayer, a self-knower, showing no mercy." The daimon within him hounded him out of his world and his day, chasing him to the uttermost marge of his own being.

> Shaken, alas, by unfamiliar fevers,
> Trembling at touch of iron-bound shafts of ice,
> By you I am chased, O thoughts!
> Unnamable! Inscrutable! Horrible!

There were moments when he recoiled as he grew aware how far life had swept him away from the living and from everything that existed before his advent on earth. But so tumultuous a rush was not easy to stay. In a convulsive ecstasy of self-knowledge and self-esteem he let fate have her will of him and accomplished the destiny his beloved Hölderlin had foreshadowed—that of Empedocles.

A landscape on the heroic scale but wherein there was no sky, a vast display at which there were no spectators, a silence growing ever more perceptible around the cry of this lonesome spirit—these are the elements of Nietzsche's life drama. We should have every right to abhor them as another among so many of nature's insensate cruelties, were it not that Nietzsche himself accepted them with rapturous assent, and that he chose and loved the unique harshness of his doom precisely because of its uniqueness. For it was voluntarily, in full lucidity of mind, that he renounced a secure existence in order to build for himself a life apart, doing so out of a profound tragical instinct. With unprecedented courage he challenged the gods, so that he might, in his own person, "experience the highest degree of danger

it is possible for man to live through." χαίρετε δαίμονες. Hail daimons!

It was with this presumptuous cry that one fine night Nietzsche and his friends defied the Powers. At that mystic hour when the spirits are abroad, they poured red wine from their brimming glasses into a sleeping street of Basel as a libation to the Unseen—a fanciful joke such as students love, but containing a prophetical warning, nevertheless. For the daimons, likely as not, hear the summons and may dog the footsteps of him who throws down the gauntlet. Nietzsche never tried to evade the demands of the monster whose grip he felt. The harder the blows, the more resonantly did the unflawed metal of his will respond. And upon this anvil, brought to red heat by passion, the hammer descended with increasing vigour, forging the slogan which was ultimately to steel his mind to every attack: "The greatness of man; amor fati; never desiring to change what has happened in the past, what will happen in the future and throughout eternity; not merely to bear the inevitable, still less to mask it, but to love it." This fervent love-song to the Powers smothers the cry of his heart. Thrown to earth, oppressed by the mutism of the world, gnawed by bitterness and sorrow, he never once raised his hands to implore a respite. Quite otherwise! He demanded to be yet further tortured, to become yet more isolated, to be granted yet deeper trials, the greatest to which mortal man can be put. Not to escape his lot, but solely with a view to making it more thoroughly part and parcel of himself did he lift his hands in prayer: "O will of my soul that I call fate, thou who art in me and above me, take care of me and preserve me for a great destiny."

He who prays so earnestly will have his prayers answered.

TWOFOLD PORTRAIT

Theatrical poses are not consonant with greatness; anyone who feels a need for posturing is false. . . . Beware of those who aim at appearing picturesque!

NIETZSCHE was not a poseur, nor was he represented as a hero during his lifetime. Since his death, many who claim to be his disciples have pictured him as an archetypal hero. Defiant carriage of the head; a lofty brow furrowed with sombre thoughts; thick, wavy hair, clustering down to the strong column of the neck; two falcon eyes beneath bushy eyebrows; every feature of this masterful countenance taut with will-power, health, and strength—such is the portrait usually given of him. Like a second Vercingetorix, he is shown with a heavy moustache falling manfully over the hard-set lips which surmount a prominent chin, and involuntarily the image called up is that of the barbarian warrior, a Viking of the Teutonic North striding forward sword in hand to victory, his hunting-horn slung over his shoulder and a spear within easy reach. It is thus that our sculptors and painters delight in portraying him, a Germanic superman, a Prometheus bound, hoping thereby to render this great recluse more accessible to men of little faith who, corrupted by school-books and stage presentations, are incapable of detecting tragedy unless it is draped in theatrical trappings. But genuine tragedy is never theatrical, and the true portrait of Nietzsche is far less picturesque than busts and paintings of him would have us believe.

To obtain a real likeness of the man, we need to see him in his actual surroundings. What were they? A dining-room in some modest boarding-house, quarters in an equally modest hotel among the Swiss mountains or on the Italian Riviera; insignificant fellow-boarders, for the most part elderly females, experts in small talk. A gong sounded for the third time and the guests filed in to dinner. One of them was a slouching figure, peering before him as if he had just emerged from a dark cave—for Nietzsche, who was "six-sevenths blind," always groped his way when entering a room. His clothes were dark of hue and carefully brushed; his face was gloomy and crowned with a mane of brown hair; his eyes, too, looked melancholy behind the thick lenses of his spectacles. Quietly and even timidly he sought the place reserved for him at the table, and he remained shrouded in an uncanny silence during the meal. One felt that this was a man who dwelt among the shadows, a man beyond the pale of human society and conversation, one who winced at the slightest noise. He would bow courteously to his fellow-guests, wishing them politely "Good day"; and in return his fellow-guests would with equally polite indifference greet "the German professor." With the tentative movements of near-sighted persons he would draw his chair up to the board; with the cautiousness of those suffering from a weak digestion, he would examine every dish, asking whether the tea was not perhaps too strong, the food too highly spiced—for an error in diet might cause him days of racking pain. There was never any wine or beer or coffee served where he sat; he smoked neither cigar nor cigarette after meals; allowed himself nothing that would cheer, refresh, and relax; kept up a perpetual Lenten abstinence accompanied by a trickle of superficial conversation with a chance neighbour, but when he made the effort to talk it was

as if he had not done so for many years, had lost the knack and dreaded lest he be asked too many questions.

Immediately the meal was ended he would retire to his room, a typical "chambre garnie," exiguous and chilly and dowdy. The table was usually littered with sheets of manuscript, with jottings on scraps of paper, with proofs. Not a flower, not an ornament, hardly a book, seldom a letter would be found. Away in a corner was a heavy and clumsily made wooden trunk—his only possession in addition to a change of underlinen and a second suit. On a shelf were ranged innumerable bottles of tinctures of this, that, and the other medicament to cure headache (to which he was a martyr), colic, spasmodic vomiting, constipation; more numerous than any other drugs in his pharmacopœia were chloral and veronal, those terrible specifics against insomnia. A ghastly collection of poisons, the only resources he had to fall back upon in case of need in the dreary silence of his lair, where he knew no other kind of repose than the brief interval of artificially produced sleep.

Wrapped in a loose overcoat, a woollen muffler round his throat—for the miserable stove merely smoked when lighted and gave forth no heat—his fingers stiff with cold, two pairs of spectacles on his nose, which almost touched the paper as he wrote, he scribbled for hours at a stretch, scribbled down words which his eyes were hard put to it to decipher when the work was done. These poor eyes burned, and watered with fatigue. One of the rare joys in his life was when a friendly person came along and offered to take down his thoughts from dictation for a couple of hours.

On fine days he might take a stroll, but he would invariably go alone, alone with his thoughts. Never did he encounter a soul to cheer him, never did he have a compan-

ion, never did he meet an acquaintance. He hated grey weather, rain, snow which dazzled his eyes; and during such inclement days he would remain a prisoner in his dingy room. He never paid calls, never came into touch with other human beings. Of an evening he supped on a few biscuits and very weak tea, which having swallowed, he would resume his endless communing with his thoughts. Hour after hour sped by in the glare of a spluttering lamp. Then the tension would relax and a welcome lassitude invade him. A gulp of chloral or other soporific, and he would snatch at sleep, at sleep which is the facile boon of those who do not think overmuch and who are not perpetually harassed by the daimons.

There were days which he spent entirely in bed, a prey to cramp in the stomach, to nausea, reduced to semi-consciousness by pain, his temples pulsing furiously, his eyes blinded by suffering. No one came near him to place a cooling bandage on his forehead, to read to him, to talk or to laugh.

Everywhere he went, the "chambre garnie" was the same. The names of the towns he visited changed from Sorrento to Turin, from Venice to Nice or Marienbad, but the "chambre garnie" remained identical, a rented room, a room totally lacking in any feeling of home, a room filled with dreary, old, worn-out furniture, with a table at which he worked, with a bed upon which he suffered, and with his unalleviated solitude. During all the years of his pilgrimage he never once put up in friendly and cheerful surroundings, never at night felt the warm body of a woman pressing against his; never did the sun rise to see him famous, after a thousand nights of dark and silent labour. How immeasurably vaster was Nietzsche's loneliness than is the picturesque highland of Sils-Maria where between luncheon and

tea our tourists wander in the hope of capturing some of the glamour that clings to a spot sanctified by his presence. Nietzsche's solitude was as wide as the world; it spread over the whole of his life until the very end.

If on some rare occasion a stranger dropped in, Nietzsche was no longer able to respond. Fifteen years of solitude had hardened the crust around his heart, so that he felt incapable of being genial and sociable. The anchorite could breathe, assuaged and comfortable, only when his chance visitor had departed! Conversation wearied and irritated him who constantly gnawed at his own vitals and whose hunger for himself, and himself alone, was never satiated.

One little ray of brightness came at times to pierce the gloom: music. He would hear *Carmen* performed in a second-rate theatre at Nice, or catch the lilt of melody in some concert-hall, or spend a few hours at the piano. But this relaxation, too, hurt him, moved him to tears. A pleasure once renounced becomes so lost to him who has forgone it that he can henceforward feel it only as suffering, as something that pains.

Nietzsche's lonely pilgrimage from one "chambre garnie" to another lasted fifteen years. During that time he remained unknown to everyone but himself. He wandered like a wraith in the shadow of great towns, in dusty trains, in various sickrooms, while all around him the vanity fair of the arts and sciences was in full swing. The only other life-journey in the slightest degree comparable is that of Dostoeffsky, who during the almost identical period was experiencing similar poverty and oblivion. In both cases alike the work of a titan masks the sepulchral figure of a Lazarus who dies daily from his poverty and his sores, and who daily rises from the tomb through the saving miracle of his own creative will. Every day, for fifteen years, Nie-

tzsche rose from the grave which was his lodging-house room, to go back to it anon, lapsing from torture to torture, from one death to another, from one resurrection to another, until in the end his brain, overheated in the furnace of his energies, was shattered.

Strangers found him, the man who was so great a stranger to his own epoch, lying in a street at Turin. They conveyed him to a strange room in the Via Carlo Alberto. None witnessed the death of his mind. His intellectual end is shrouded in obscurity, in a saintly isolation. Solitary and unknown, the most lucid genius of the epoch was precipitated into the night of his own soul.

APOLOGIA FOR ILLNESS

That which does not kill me strengthens me.

NIETZSCHE's body was afflicted with so many and varied tribulations that in the end he could with perfect truth declare: "At every age of my life, suffering, monstrous suffering, was my lot." Headaches so ferocious that all he could do was to collapse onto a couch and groan in agony, stomach troubles culminating in cramps when he would vomit blood, migrainous conditions of every sort, fevers, loss of appetite, exhaustion, hæmorrhoids, intestinal stasis, rigors, night-sweats—a gruesome enumeration, indeed. Added to these was the fact that he was nearly blind, that after the smallest strain his eyes would swell and water so that he should not have imposed on them more than one and a half hours of work a day. Ignoring such precautionary measures, he would spend ten hours at a stretch over his writing-table. But his brain took revenge for this excess; cephalalgia was the result. His nervous tension would at such times be so extreme that it was impossible for him to relax. Though his body was wearied to exhaustion he could not sleep. Unless he forced matters by a dose of veronal or the like, his mind persisted in elaborating thoughts and visions; and to bring about this urgently needed rest, increasingly massive doses of the hypnotic had to be absorbed (in two months Nietzsche consumed as many ounces of chloral hydrate). The stomach would then rebel, and the vicious circle would start anew—vomiting, headaches, and

so forth, to which fresh remedies had to be applied. His bodily organs were a battlefield, reacting upon one another to their common disadvantage. Without let or pause his sufferings were a daily martyrdom; he was never allowed a month of contentment during which to forget himself and his miseries. In all his correspondence there are barely a dozen letters in which a groan or a cry of lamentation does not go up from every page. Goaded to despair by his sensitive nerves, he wrote: "Lighten the burden of your fate: die!" Or, again: "A pistol is for me now a source of relatively pleasant thoughts." And yet again: "This terrible and almost unceasing martyrdom makes me yearn for the end; and, judging by certain indications, I fancy the brainstorm that will free me is near at hand."

A time came when his vocabulary of superlatives was exhausted, and he found no words to describe his anguish. The rack called forth monotonous cries, repeated with increasing rapidity and becoming less and less human. They reach our ears from the depths of what he described as "a dog's life." Then, suddenly, like lightning in a clear sky—and none of us can fail to be taken aback by so unprecedented a contradiction—he announced in his *Ecce Homo:* "Summa, summarum, I have enjoyed good health" (he is referring to the fifteen years which preceded his mental death)—a fine profession of faith, strong, proud, clear-cut, seeming to tax with falsehood the groans of despair that had gone before.

Which are we to believe, the cries of distress or the lapidary aphorism? Both! Nietzsche had a good constitution which made him capable of resistance. His body was well built, a column which would not bend under the heaviest load. His parsonic ancestors were true men of the German countryside, hale in life and limb. In a general way, and

taking it all in all, both his temperament and his body, both his mental and physical equipment, were sound. But his sensitiveness made him unable to cope with the violence of his feelings, so that his nerves were constantly in revolt. Yet this revolt was never able to shake the man's iron command over his intellectual activities.

Nietzsche found an apt way of describing his condition on the borderline between safety and danger, when he wrote of his sufferings as "the pepperings of musketry fire." The besieging armies of his aches and pains never breached the walls of the citadel. He lived like Gulliver in Lilliput, a giant perpetually tormented by a thousand pygmy ailments. His nerves were on the alert, eternally keeping vigil, for ever on the watch, engrossed in the defence of his organism. As for a down-right illness, he never had such a thing. Yet for twenty long years an illness was undermining the innermost sanctum of his being, was laying the charge which was to blow up the fort when the time was ripe. A mind as monumental as Nietzsche's does not succumb to a petty fusillade; an explosion alone is capable of shattering the granite strength of such a mind.

Thus an enormous capacity for suffering was juxtaposed with an enormous capacity of resistance to the ravages suffering entails, and a too vehement sensibility confronted an all too delicately poised motor system. Each nerve of the stomach, the heart, the sense organs, constituted a manometer whereon were recorded with the utmost precision the minutest modifications and tensions let loose by pain. His body, like his mind, was acutely aware of its actions and reactions. The tiniest fibre, which in ordinary mortals gives no sign of its existence, immediately made him aware of its message by a spasm, so that his "mad irritability" broke up into a thousand sharp splinters the vitality which was by

nature a source of strength within him. That is why such agonizing wails were forced from him when at every step through life he unexpectedly touched one of these vibrant nerves on the raw.

This hypersensitiveness, which could be shaken acutely by the most airy of impacts—impacts hardly penetrating the superficial layers of consciousness where ordinary mortals are concerned—was the root and origin of his woes, and the wellspring of his amazing power to appreciate values. If his blood coursed more swiftly through his veins on occasions, no tangible or affective cause could be adduced to account for the physiological phenomenon: all that was needed to set him in vibration was the air he breathed, with its hourly changes. I doubt if there ever has been a man so sensitive as Nietzsche to atmospheric alterations, one who so minutely responded to meteorological tensions and oscillations. His whole body was like quicksilver, like a barometer. An intimate relationship existed between his pulse and the atmospheric pressure, between his nerves and the degree of humidity in the air; an electric current seemed to flow from him outward, and from the universe back to him. Every few feet of altitude were registered within him as on an aneroid, every oscillation of temperature announced itself by a succession of pain and suffering within his body, which reacted promptly to each jolt of nature. His vitality was less resistant during rainy and overcast weather: "grey skies make me feel horribly depressed"; heavy clouds disturbed him "to the very inwards"; "rain takes all the strength out of me"; dampness enfeebled, drought renewed his vigour, the sun brought him to life again, winter was for him a kind of "lockjaw" and filled his mind with thoughts of imminent death. The fluctuations of his nerve-barometer were like those of April weather, rush-

ing from one extreme to another; "he triumphed and he saddened with all weather." What he needed was a serene, a cloudless landscape, high up on a plateau of the Engadine, where no wind came to disturb the peace and calm.

These physical responses to natural phenomena had their equivalent in the world of his mind. Every time a thought was born within him, it flashed like a streak of forked lightning. The act of thought was fulfilled with so intoxicating an ecstasy, with so electrical a spasm, that it dealt with his body as a storm does with a countryside. At every explosion of feeling, no more than a second was required to modify the circulation of his blood. In this livest of thinkers, body and mind were so intimately wedded to atmospheric phenomena that for him interior and exterior happenings were identical. "I am neither mind nor body, but a tertium quid. I suffer everywhere and for everything."

Nietzsche's inborn disposition toward an unduly violent reaction to every stimulus was undoubtedly fostered by the fifteen years he spent in a stifling atmosphere of seclusion. Since during the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year nothing corporeal, neither woman nor friend, came into personal contact with him, since he exchanged scarcely a syllable with anyone but himself, he carried on an uninterrupted dialogue with his own nerves. The compass of his sensations lay for ever in his palm and, like all anchorites, hermits, introverts, eccentrics, and originals, he noted with hypochondriacal precision the slightest modifications in the functioning of his organs. Ordinary mortals are able to forget themselves in talk with their fellows, in business interests, in sport and relaxation; they dull their irritability by means of wine and indifference. Not so a Nietzsche! His genius as diagnostician constantly tempted him to gratify his curiosity in the domain of psychology by taking himself

and his sufferings as subjects for "personal experiments." Simultaneously playing the parts of doctor and patient, he dissected out the pains that tortured him, laying bare his nerves, and, like all sensitive and imaginative persons, he thereby succeeded in intensifying his hyperexcitability. Being sceptical in his attitude toward physicians, he became his own physician, and "doctored" himself continually. He tried treatment after treatment—electrical massage, dieting, drinking special waters, taking medicinal baths. Sometimes he had recourse to bromides in order to blunt his excitability; at other times he tuned his nerves up to snapping-point by tonic medication. He was perpetually seeking to create a special atmosphere for himself, a realm peculiar to himself, "a climate for my soul" to dwell in. Lugano attracted him on account of its "lake air and the absence of wind"; then he went to Pfäfers; next, to Sorrento. Followed Ragaz, where he thought to find relief in the baths, St. Moritz, the spas of Baden-Baden and Marienbad. A springtime spent in the Engadine made him feel that he had found a spot which possessed a kinship to his own nature because of its ozone-laden air. Soon, however, the "dry" climate of Nice lured him south again, and after staying there for a while he went to Genoa and Venice. Now he longed for the woodlands, then he craved for the sea; again he wished to live on the shores of a lake, or in some quiet little town where he could procure "simple but nourishing food."

I wonder how many thousands of kilometres Nietzsche travelled in quest of the fairyland where his nerves might find repose. He pondered over huge works on geology, hoping to find the exact place where he might win repose of body and tranquillity of mind. Distance was no obstacle to its attainment: he planned a journey to Barcelona, and

voyages to the mountains of Mexico, to Argentina, to Japan. The geographical position, the climate, the native diet shaped themselves gradually into a peculiar science in relation to his morbid symptoms. Notes were made on the temperature and the atmospheric pressure at each place he selected; the local rainfall was scheduled with the utmost exactitude.

As to the actual precautionary measures he took to secure immunity, here is a selection: tea must be of a special brand, the dose to be accurately measured; meat was poison to him; vegetables needed to be cooked in a special way. Little by little this constant doctoring and diagnosing led him into a morbid state of solipsism, became a mania. Self-vivisection naturally made things worse. As is invariably the case with a psychologist, Nietzsche suffered twice as much as a layman, because he had to suffer both subjectively and objectively.

But Nietzsche was a battlefield of contradictions. Goethe in his wisdom knew how to steer clear of danger; but Nietzsche audaciously went forth to meet danger, to take the bull by the horns. Though psychological study and intellectuality are prone to sweep an impressionable man into an abyss of suffering and despair, they are also capable of bringing him back to health and sanity. Nietzsche was gifted with a genius for self-analysis; and, just as his ailments were mainly due to this gift, so by it he was once again made whole. Thus psychology in this instance became therapeutics, became a marvellous application of that "alchemist's art" which boasts of being able to "extract value from something which contains no value at all."

After ten years of struggle, Nietzsche's "vitality reached its lowest ebb"; he seemed to have been beaten in the duel with his nerves, a prey to depression, pessimism, despair.

Then, unexpectedly, a change took place in his spiritual balance, one of those quasi-miraculous "recoveries," those auto-salvations, which render the story of his mind so dramatic, so splendid, and so moving. He grappled with the illness which was undermining him and hugged it to his heart. A mystical moment, the time of whose advent cannot be fixed with any certitude, one of those fulminating moments which would burst like an inspiration into the heart of his work, a moment when he "discovered" his illness, when it was suddenly and to his surprise borne in upon him that he was still alive, that in spite of the profoundest depression and during the most anguishing epoch of his existence his productivity had never ceased, had, indeed, grown in amplitude, a moment when he could proclaim his conviction that his sufferings, his privations formed an essential part of "the cause," the only cause so far as he was concerned, the sacred cause of his life. As soon as his mind had ceased to pity his body, no longer participated in its sufferings, he recognized that his life had acquired a new perspective and his illness a deeper significance. Consciously, well knowing what he was about, he now accepted the burden, accepted his fate as a necessity, and since he was a fanatical "advocate of life," loving the whole of his existence, he accepted his sufferings with the "Yes" of his Zarathustra and, as accompaniment to his tortures, sang the jubilant hymn "again and yet again for all eternity!" Knowledge thus became recognition, and recognition gratitude. For now that he was able to contemplate his anguish from the heights, to see in it the road leading to himself, he discovered (with the joy he invariably felt in the magic of extremes) that he owed to no earthly power so much as to his illness, that, indeed, it was his tortures that he had to thank for his greatest blessing—his freedom, physical free-

dom and freedom of the mind. For whenever he had tried to settle down, to lead an easy life, to grow fat and flabby, whenever he ran the risk of losing his originality by prematurely becoming petrified in an official post, a profession, a special form of intellectual activity—illness had goaded him from his refuge. Ill-health prevented him from being enrolled in the army, and he was thus enabled to continue his scientific studies; to ill-health, again, he owed it that he did not fall into a rut but was plucked away from science, from the university circle at Basel, and thrust out into a larger world, the world of his own being. Through his afflicted eyes he was protected from enslavement to books, "one of the greatest services I owe to myself." Every tie that threatened to be imposed on him was severed by suffering—a cruel but necessary operation. "Illness itself frees me," he wrote; illness was the midwife that brought his inner man into the world, and the pains he experienced were labour pains. Thanks to illness, life never became a routine but remained a perpetual regeneration, an adventure, a discovery. "I discovered life as something new, myself included."

Henceforward the tortured poet-philosopher sang a pæan of gratitude to "holy suffering," recognizing that through suffering alone can man attain to knowledge. Animal health, which is inherited and has never been shaken, can find contentment unconsciously. People who enjoy perfect health are not capable of becoming psychologists, for they desire nothing and they ask no questions, being satisfied with current everyday happenings. Suffering, on the other hand, leads to knowledge, for "pain seeks out causes, whereas pleasure is inclined to remain in situ and never to look backwards." One "is fined down by suffering." Suffering digs and delves and ploughs the soil of the soul so

that it is made friable and prepared for the new harvest. "Great suffering is the ultimate liberator of the mind, it alone constrains us to plunge into our innermost depths," and he who has suffered "even unto the agony of death" has the right to pronounce the words: "I know life better because I have so often been on the verge of losing it."

Nietzsche did not triumph over his sufferings by jugglery, by negation, by palliatives, or by idealizing his body's torture, but by the primal strength of his disposition, by awareness. The prince of discoverers of values disclosed to his own self the value of his ill-health. A martyr by contraries, he was not put to the torture because of a faith which had already become established in his mind. No, it was out of torment, it was when he was upon the rack, that he formulated his creed. Thus our chemist of the soul discovered, not merely the value of illness, but likewise its polar opposite, the value of health. The two need to be conjoined if life is to be appreciated to the full; there must be a perpetual state of tension between torment and ecstasy if man is to be projected into the infinite. Both are indispensable, illness as means and health as the goal. Suffering, according to Nietzsche, is but the shadowy side of illness. The other side is irradiate with the idea of recovery. But we can reach this sunlit shore only by way of suffering. Now, to get well, to regain health, means more than just to achieve a normal condition of life; it is not merely a transformation; it is infinitely more, for it is an ascension, an assumption, an increase in sensitiveness. One recovers from illness "with a new skin," "more ticklish," possessing a "finer taste for pleasure," a "finer palate for the appreciation of delicacies, a livelier voice, and a second, more dangerous, innocence in the midst of joy," like a child's, yet far more subtle than any experienced in youth. And this secondarily acquired health,

which was the outcome of a "conquest over suffering," which was not granted to him blindly and gratuitously but by levying a heavy toll of sighs and groans, was a thousandfold more vigorous than the wellbeing of persons who are always well. Once having tasted the delight of recovery, he for ever desired the joy to be renewed that he might once again experience the thrill. Thus he ran over and over again to the dolorous encounter so as to recapture "the enchanting sensation of good health," that "scintillating drunkenness" to undergo which Nietzsche renounced the elysium of alcohol and nicotine.

No sooner had he grasped the meaning of his illness and enjoyed the voluptuous delight of health than he wished to transform it into an apostolate and to explain by it the meaning of the universe. Like all those possessed by the daimon, he was a slave to his own ecstasy, and he found henceforward no comfort in the dazzling see-saw between pleasure and pain. He desired further and more agonizing martyrdom so as to swing higher and ever higher into the uppermost and most blessed sphere of recovery, where all is serenity and strength. In the excess of his enthusiasm, he came to confound his wish to be well with health itself, to take his feverishness for vitality and his vertiginous fall into the depths of illness for an increase in power. Health! Health! This was the device inscribed upon his banner. Health was the standard of every value, the aim of life, the meaning of the universe. After ten years of groping in the dark, suffocating with torments, he quelled his groans so as to intone a hymn of praise in honour of vitality, of brute force, of power-intoxicated strength. The will-to-power was the life-principle. The will-to-be-hard must be the goal of man in the coming age. Little did he imagine that the force which gave him the strength to shout his message was already standing

with bow taut to let loose the arrow which was to kill him.

For this spurt of health was a fiction of Nietzsche's imagination, an autosuggestion. In *Ecce Homo* he boasted of his unfailing health, denied that he had ever been ill; and yet this book was penned on the eve of his mental breakdown. His pæan was not sung to life triumphant but, alas, to his own death. No longer are we listening to the ideas of a scientifically trained mind but to the incoherent words of the daimon which had taken possession of its victim. What he mistook for illumination, for the fiery glow of his blood, was in reality the poisonous germ of the catastrophe which awaited him. The euphoria of this penultimate phase is a well-known symptom preceding the final collapse. His last hours of consciousness were suffused by a silvery sheen which made him aware of the vibrations in another realm, in the realm of the daimon, the realm of the beyond. But he, in his intoxication, was incapable of grasping the plain facts. He was filled with self-satisfaction and self-assertion, illuminated by the splendour and beneficence of the earth.

Ideas flowed from him like a cascade of fire, his tongue spoke with a primitive eloquence, music invaded every nook and cranny of his being. Withersoever he looked, he saw the reign of peace. Passers-by smiled at him as he roamed the streets. Every letter he wrote conveyed a divine message, glowed with happiness. In the last letter he was fated to write, he said to Peter Gast: "Sing me a new song: the world is transfigured and the heavens rejoice." Out of these same heavens came the bolt which laid him low, mingling in an indissoluble interval of time every suffering and every beatitude. The two extremes of feeling entered together into his being, and his pulses throbbed at one and the same instant with life and with death.

THE DON JUAN OF THE INTELLECTUAL WORLD

What is of genuine importance is eternal vitality, not eternal life.

KNOWLEDGE was Kant's daily and nightly companion; she lived with him and bedded with him for forty years on the same spiritual couch; he procreated with her a family of German philosophical systems whose descendants still live with us in every middle-class circle. His relationship to truth was essentially monogamous. The urge that brought Schelling, Fichte, Hegel, and Schopenhauer to philosophy was a desire for order, a desire which has nothing daimonic about it, but is typical of the easy-going German nature, objective and professional, tending to discipline the mind and to establish a well-ordered architectonic of existence. They love truth, honourably, faithfully, durably. No selfishness has any place in this love, there is nothing erotic about it, no desire to consume or be consumed in the furnace of passion. Truth is for them a docile spouse from whom they do not part until death calls. They, too, remain faithful until the end. Their relation to truth, therefore, invariably smacks of domesticity; and as an actual fact, each one of them built a house, that is to say, a special philosophical system, wherein to accommodate bride and bed. With a master hand they plied harrow and plough in the spiritual field they had wrenched from chaos in order to bequeath it to mankind. They pushed the frontiers of knowledge far beyond the cul-

ture of their times and, in the sweat of their brows, they increased the spiritual harvest.

Nietzsche's craving for knowledge arose from a totally different emotional world. His attitude towards truth was a passionate and breathless tremor, was high-strung and inquisitive, never satisfied, never appeased, never contented with achievement but precipitating itself, beyond every response, into further impatient and insatiable questionings. Having acquired the knowledge he was in search of, he was incapable of making it his own in perpetuity, of espousing it, of shaping it into a system, a doctrine. Everything allured him; nothing was able to retain his interest. So soon as a problem had lost its virginity, had lost the charm and mystery of maidenhood, he forsook it pitilessly, without jealousy, for others to enjoy if they cared to—as did Don Juan, his brother so far as the impulsive life was concerned, in the case of his "mille e tre." For just as genuine seducers are for ever seeking among womankind the one and only woman of their hearts, so did Nietzsche seek among all kinds of knowledge the unique knowledge of his choice, the knowledge doomed to everlasting unreality and eternally eluding his grasp. It was not desire for conquest and possession and sensual enjoyment which stirred him, thrilled him, and reduced him almost to despair; but invariably questionings, doubts, the pursuit of knowledge. He loved insecurity not certainty; and consequently his lusts turned for gratification to metaphysics and consisted of "amour-plaisir" in knowledge. He yearned to seduce, to lay bare, to penetrate voluptuously, and to violate every spiritual object—"to know" in the Biblical sense of the word, when a man "knows" a woman and thereby filches her secret. This everlasting relativist of values recognized that his acts of possession never knew truth to the uttermost limits, for, in the last resort,

truth never gives herself wholly to anyone: "He who fancies he is in possession of truth, has no inkling of how much eludes his grasp."

Nietzsche, therefore, never set up house with knowledge so as to economize and preserve; he built no spiritual home over his head. Maybe it was a nomadic instinct which forced him into a position of never owning anything. Like a Nimrod of the mind, he ranged through the forests of the spiritual world, alone, with no roof to protect him, no wife, no child, no servant; nevertheless, he was filled with the pleasures of the chase, a hunter incarnate. As in Don Juan's case so in Nietzsche's the duration of an emotion was a matter for indifference; what held import for him was the fleeting "moments of grandeur and rapturous delight." Hazardous activities of the mind, those "dangerous maybes" which make a man glow with ardour and which goad him to the pursuit but fail to satisfy his longing when once attained, these were the only adventures that attracted Nietzsche. He did not desire the quarry but the spirit, the spur, the pleasures of the hunt for knowledge, upward and onward to the outermost stars, until in the end there was nothing left for him to hunt but the residue of all that is harmful in knowledge—"like a toper who finally comes down to drinking absinth or nitric acid."

For the Don Juan in Nietzsche was not an epicure, he was not dainty in his choice, neither could he enjoy robustly: this finical aristocrat with his quivering nerves lacked the sleepy ease of digestion, the lazy contentment of satisfied appetite, the boastfulness which makes the common mortal parade his conquests. The woman-hunter is himself hunted by his insatiable desires: thus, likewise, the Nimrod of the mind; the unscrupulous seducer is himself seduced by consuming curiosity, he is a tempter who is everlastingly

tempted to tempt women to forgo their innocence, just as Nietzsche was perpetually interrogating the universe for the mere pleasure of questioning and to gratify his inextinguishable psychological lust. For Don Juan the mystery was contained in everything and in nothing, in each woman for one night and in no woman thereafter. Thus is it also in the case of a psychologist for whom in every problem truth resides but for a moment and never permanently.

Nietzsche therefore was denied repose and calm in the realm of thought. His mental life was full of unexpected twists and turns. Other German philosophers lived in a quasi-epic tranquillity; they spun their theories quietly from day to day, sitting commodiously in an armchair, and their thought-process hardly raised their blood-pressure by a single degree. Kant never produces the impression of a mind seized by thought as by a vampire, and painfully enduring the terrible urge of creation; Schopenhauer from thirty onwards, after he had published *The World as Will and Idea,* seems to me a staid professor who has retired on a pension and has accepted the conviction that his career is finished. They have chosen a road, and calmly walk along it to the end; whereas Nietzsche was for ever tracked down and pushed towards the unknown. That is why Nietzsche's intellectual story (like Don Juan's bodily story) assumes a dramatic aspect, constitutes a chain of unforeseen episodes, a tragedy which passes unintermittently from one vicissitude to another even more perilous, until it culminates in annihilation.

Now, what renders this life unique and tragical is precisely the absence of repose in Nietzsche's searchings, his incessant urge to think, his compulsory advance. These make his life a work of art. Nietzsche was doomed to think without respite like the legendary hunter who was condemned to

an everlasting chase. What was once a pleasure became for him a bugbear, an affliction, so that his style grew breathless and spasmodic like a panting beast which recognizes that it will soon have to face the hounds, at bay. Nietzsche's complaint, therefore, moves us profoundly. "One falls in love with something, and hardly has this something had time to become a deep-felt love than the tyrant within, which we should do well to name our higher self, claims our love for the sacrifice. And we yield to the dictator, though ourselves consumed in a slow fire." Don Juan natures have ever to be wrenched from love's embraces, for the daimon of dissatisfaction incessantly urges them to further exploits—the same daimon that harried Hölderlin and Kleist and harries all those who worship the infinite. Nietzsche himself exclaimed: "Everywhere I go, I find gardens of Armida and, consequently, ever-fresh bereavements and ever-renewed bitterness of heart. I am forced to lift my foot, my weary and wounded foot, and it is precisely because I am constrained to advance that I throw a backward glance into the past, a covetous glance upon the beauties it contains—begrudging them because of their inability to hold me!"

Such cries, wrenched from the depths of a suffering human creature, are not to be met with among the German philosophers who preceded Nietzsche. We may encounter them in the mystics of the Middle Ages, the heretics, or the saints of the Gothic era, but then they are for the most part uttered between clenched teeth and strike the ear less stridently. Pascal in his day went through a purgatory of doubt, and he experienced a similar upheaval and annihilation of the questing spirit; but neither Leibniz nor Kant nor Hegel nor Schopenhauer is capable of stirring us with so primitive a groan. Loyal they may be, courageous and resolute, yet they never throw themselves heart and soul and destiny

into the heroic game with knowledge. Theirs is the light of a candle, that is to say, they burn from the top only, with head and with mind. They have their reserves, keeping their private existence sheltered from the blows of fate. Nietzsche, on the contrary, gave himself completely, fronting danger not merely "with the antennæ of cold and inquisitive thought," but with voluptuous ardour, with the whole weight of his destiny. His thoughts do not come only from on high, are not simply conjured out of his brain, but are at the same time engendered by the fever of his blood, by violently quivering nerves, by ungratified sense organs, by the consuming might of the entirety of his vital forces. Hence his ideas, like those of Pascal, tend to become "a passion-fraught history of the soul"; they are the extreme consequence of perilous, nay, almost mortal, adventures, a living drama moving us profoundly. Yet even when he was in the bitterest distress Nietzsche had no desire to change his lot for another, milder, fate; he did not wish to exchange his "dangerous life" for stability and repose of mind, would not for any consideration dam up the overflow of his feelings. Nietzsche hated such a prospect, seeing therein a diminution of vitality. Away with security! Out upon satiety and contentedness with what one has! "How is it possible to be placed in this amazing uncertainty and multiplicity called 'existence' without questioning its meaning, without trembling with curiosity, and without the voluptuous emotion engendered by questioning?" Thus did he rail at our sit-by-the-fires, and make mock of those who are easily satisfied. He, the typical adventurer in the long savannas of thought, was not even inclined to possess his own life; here again he demanded a surplus on the grand scale: "What is of genuine importance is eternal vitality, not eternal life."

For the first time on the ocean of German philosophy the

black flag was hoisted upon a pirate ship. Nietzsche was a man of a different species, of another race, of a novel type of heroism; his philosophy was not clad in professorial robes, but was harnessed for the fray like a knight in shining armour. Others before him, hardy navigators of the spiritual world, discovered continents and founded empires; they were animated to a certain degree by a civilizing and utilitarian intent, hoping to win those unknown lands to the profit of mankind, to complete the map of the philosophic world by penetrating farther and ever farther into the terra incognita of thought. They set up the standard of God or of the mind in these new-found lands, they built cities and temples, planned out streets and avenues in the unknown, while governors and administrators followed in their steps in order to reap the harvest of the pioneers' labours—commentators, dons, men of culture, and the like. But the aim of these forerunners in the philosophical universe was repose, was peace and security. They desired to increase terrestrial possessions, to promulgate norms and laws, to inaugurate a superior kind of order. Just as the filibusters invaded the Spanish world towards the close of the sixteenth century—a lawless gang of desperadoes, lacking restraint, acknowledging no king, men without a flag and without a home—so Nietzsche made an irruption into the philosophical world, conquering nothing either for himself or for those who should come after; his victories were not achieved for the sake of a monarch or dedicated to the greater glory of God, but purely for the intrinsic joy of conquest, since he did not wish to possess or to acquire or to conquer. He was a disturber of the peace, his one desire being to plunder, to destroy property relationships, to trouble the repose of his fellow-mortals. With fire and sword he went forth to awaken the minds of men, an awakening as precious to him

as is a fusty sleep to the vast majority of mankind. In his wake, as in the wake of the filibusters of old, churches were desecrated, altars were overturned, feelings injured, convictions assassinated, moral sheepfolds sacked; every horizon blazed with incendiary fires, monstrous beacons of daring and violence. Never did he look back to gloat over his acquisitions or to appropriate his conquests. He strove everlastingly towards what had never been explored and conquered; his one and only pleasure was to try out his strength and to rouse up those who slumbered. He was a member of no creed, had never sworn allegiance to any country. With the black flag at his masthead and steering into the unknown, into incertitude which he felt to be the mate of his soul, he sailed forward to ever-renewed and perilous adventures. Sword in hand and powder-barrel at his feet, he left the shores of the known behind him and sang his pirate song as he went:

I know whence I spring.
Insatiable as a flame,
I glow and consume myself.
All I touch flashes into fire,
All I leave is a charred remnant.
Such by nature am I—flame.

PASSION FOR SINCERITY

One commandment suffices thee: Be sincere.

EARLY in his career Nietzsche had planned to write a work entitled *Passio nuovo, or the Passion for Sincerity*. The book was never written; but, what was perhaps better, it was lived in Nietzsche's own person. For throughout the philosopher's years of growth and change, a fanatical passion for truthfulness remained as the primitive and fecundating element of all he undertook.

Sincerity, uprightness, purity! Strange that we find in this amoralist none of the primitive and erratic trends. Any grocer or merchant or lawyer—worthy bourgeois all—could preen himself on so much virtue at least, could vaunt his honesty, his sincerity even unto the grave. Nietzsche's desideratum was, then, no more than an intellectualized virtue of ordinary folk, mediocre and conventional.

But where the emotions are concerned it is not so much the substance that matters as the intensity. Even ideas which have become commonplace, when taken up by daimonic natures, may be transported into the chaos whence issues the creative impulse, may be carried upward into a sphere of everlasting tension. Such temperaments can endue the most insignificant and outworn conventions with a vesture of ecstatic enthusiasm. That which is seized upon by one possessed of the daimon immediately returns to its chaotic condition and is filled with an overwhelming strength.

For such reasons the sincerity of a man like Nietzsche has

nothing akin to the trite honesty of a carefully trained gentleman. His love of truth is a flame, a demon of veracity, a demon of lucidity, is a hunting beast ever on the prowl, its senses alert to scent the prey, its carnivorous instincts whetted for the onslaught. Nietzschean candour has nothing in common with domesticated caution; it was never curbed and disciplined so as to be a welcome guest at some decent, self-respecting merchant's hearth, nor was there in his straightforwardness any of the gross brutality of such a thinker as Martin Luther or of such a man of action as Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas, who, wearing metaphorical blinkers, look neither to right nor left, but charge forward in pursuit of one single truth—which happens to be the only one they can see.

Now, though Nietzsche's passion for truth was sometimes violent and savage, it never became limited or narrow-minded; it was too highly strung, too cultivated for that. It was never obstinate, never stuck in a groove, but leapt from problem to problem with the ardour and agility of a flame, consuming and illuminating each in turn, flashing up and burning to temporary extinction—but never appeased. Such duality is a fine thing to contemplate: passion and sincerity mutually reinforcing each other. I can remember hardly any philosophical genius who possessed at one and the same time so much ethical stability and so great a probity of character.

Nietzsche was predestined to become the clearest of thinkers. He who understood and practised psychology with so profound a passion became aware of his whole being with a sense of gratification experienced only by those who have brought something vital to perfectionment and completion. His candour, his truthfulness, his veracity are like music, like a mighty fugue, satisfying the intellect and emotions simultaneously, passing from a virile andante to a magnifi-

cent maestoso, perpetually renewing itself, a marvel of polyphonic grandeur. Clarity in Nietzsche's case became a magic art. This man who was more than half blind, who groped his way, who lived in the darkness like an owl, had, where matters psychological were concerned, the eye of a hawk which instantaneously, like all birds of prey, with infallible precision, pounces from a great height to seize its victim. In this respect his gaze was piercing, and no shade, however subtle, could elude it. Nothing was hidden from this greatest of psychologists, who could transpierce clothing, skin, flesh, and reach the innermost depths of a problem as though his intellect were equipped with X-rays. And just as, physically, he reacted to atmospheric pressure as though he were a barometer, so his mind registered with unimpeachable exactitude every delicate difference in the moral sphere.

Nietzsche owed his psychological insight, not to his intellect, which was as hard and scintillating as a diamond, but to his hypersensitiveness. He smelled, he sniffed, he savoured with the spontaneity of a physical function, writing: "My genius resides in my nostrils." Thus he could detect everything that was not wholly pure and healthy in the intellectual life of mankind. "I have a quite uncanny irritability of the instinct for purity, so that I actually feel, indeed I smell, the proximity, the depths, nay, the very entrails of every mind."

Thus everything which had been adulterated with spurious moralism, with ecclesiastical incense, with lying artificiality, with patriotic phrase-mongering, or with any other narcotic to quiet the conscience, was ferreted out by Nietzsche with unerring assurance. His sense of smell was so fine that nothing corrupt, putrefying, or unwholesome could escape his notice. Clarity, purity, cleanliness were as neces-

sary to his mind as were fresh air and limpid contours to his body. Psychology was for him, as it should be for every psychologist, an "interpretation of the body," a prolongation into the cerebral sphere of what had already been discerned in the nervous. Compared with Nietzsche's seer's vision, the other psychologists of his epoch seem dull and commonplace. Even Stendhal, who had nerves as keenly attuned, wilts in comparison with Nietzsche, for he was lacking in passionate insistence and in vehemence. He was content to jot down certain observations, whereas Nietzsche precipitated himself with the utmost enthusiasm upon the tiniest experience, as a bird of prey pounces upon the most inconspicuous of animals. Dostoeffsky alone was Nietzsche's peer in the matter of "nerve lucidity," the former's nervous insight being likewise due to hypertension, to a morbid and excessive sensibility. On the other hand, Dostoeffsky's sense of veracity was far less highly developed; he was capable of injustice and exaggeration in the very article of revelation, whereas even at the height of ecstasy Nietzsche never sacrificed an iota of the truth. For this reason it would seem that never had there been a man so admirably predestined as Nietzsche, alike by nature and by inborn capacity, for the psychologist's career; never was a spirit more exquisitely adjusted to serve as barometer for the meteorological records of the soul; never before had the study of values been equipped with an instrument as precise as it was sublime.

But the perfect psychologist needs to wield other tools than the finest and most trenchant of scalpels, than the most delicately balanced instrument of thought; he must also be possessed of a hand as hard and pliable as steel, a hand that will not tremble or draw back once the operation has begun —for psychological operations demand something more

than talent, they require character and the courage to think one's thoughts out to their logical conclusion. Psychology consists, further, in the faculty for knowing conjoined to a virile and primitive desirè to know. A genuine psychologist must will to see with as much force as he desires to see; personal anxiety and personal feeling must not deter him from looking straight at truth; his feelings and scruples must not be allowed to lull him to sleep. The plain duty of loyal thinkers is unremitting vigilance; they must keep compromise at bay, dare not allow themselves to be indulgent, or timid, or compassionate; none of the ordinary civic virtues (or weaknesses!) can be conceded them. These warriors, these conquistadors of the mind, dare not, out of complacency, allow a single truth, taken prisoner in the course of their venturesome patrol, to escape. In the domain of knowledge "blindness is not a mistake, but is poltroonery," good nature is a crime, for he who fears to be put to the blush, he who shrinks from wounding his neighbour, he who dreads the cry of pain from a person unmasked, he who recoils before nakedness, such a one will never discover the secret of secrets. Truth which fails to attain the utmost limits, which is not absolute, has no ethical value. Such an attitude of mind accounts for Nietzsche's detestation of those who, through slackness or cowardice in the realm of thought, neglect the sacred task of straightforwardness; hence his anger against Kant, because that philosopher, while turning his blind eye to the postern, allowed the concept of the godhead to slip back into his system; hence Nietzsche's hatred for those who, in the realm of philosophy, close or even blink their eyes to truth; hence his loathing for "the devil or the demon of nebulousness" that veils or smudges ultimate truth. Truth is not to be reached through flattery; secrets cannot be disclosed in the course of friendly and seductive conver-

sation. One needs to draw "the bolts of nature's secrecies," to attack her with violence, if her most precious mysteries are to be revealed. The "atrociousness and majesty of infinite claims" can be attained "on the grand scale" only if we resort to brute strength. We must brace all our sinews, must harden our hands, if that which is hidden is to be wrenched from its abiding-place. Lacking sincerity, we cannot hope to attain to knowledge; lacking resoluteness, we cannot hope to be sincere. "I become blind from the moment when I cease to be sincere. If I wish to know, I needs must be sincere, that is to say, I must be hard, severe, narrow-minded, cruel, inexorable."

The fairy that presided at Nietzsche's birth endowed him with a falcon eye, but failed to give him the necessary hardness and implacability. The latter virtues he was obliged to acquire at the cost of his life, his tranquillity, his sleep, and his general wellbeing. He was by nature a gentle soul, liking good company, and eminently accessible; but his mission compelled him to be harsh so far as his own feelings were concerned, and quite half his life was spent (so to say) in the fires. To understand the moral agony of such a process we need to delve deep into our own selves. We have to understand that, while consuming all that was gentle and kindly in his disposition, Nietzsche had likewise to destroy the human attributes which linked him to his fellow-mortals. In the end, his life became so heated by the intensity of his own ardours that those who wished to approach him were scorched by the concentration of his personal fire. Just as a wound is cauterized to purify it, for the same purpose does Nietzsche tear out his sensibilities. He is mercilessly sincere in the use of the red-hot iron of his will. His very loneliness is self-enforced. Like all fanatics, he sacrificed even those he loved (as in the case of Richard Wagner, whose

friendship had been for Nietzsche one of the most hallowed). He allowed himself to become penurious, solitary, detested, an anchorite and miserable, solely with a view to remaining true to himself, in order to fulfil his mission as apostle of sincerity. This passion for sincerity became, as time elapsed, a monomania in which the good things of life were absorbed. Needless for us to worry our heads with such questions as, "What did Nietzsche want?"; "What did Nietzsche think?"; "What system of philosophy did he aim at constructing?" He revelled in his passion for sincerity, and all he desired was to gratify this passion to the full. Finality, therefore, cannot be expected. Nietzsche wished neither to better the world nor to inform the world, nor yet to assuage himself. His ecstasy was an end in itself, a delight sufficient in itself, a personal voluptuousness, wholly egoistical and elementary. The stage of "noble child's play and an essay at dogmatism" having long been left behind, Nietzsche, in spite of a vast expenditure of energy, never in his riper years tried to formulate a doctrine, still less to found a religion. "I have nothing of the founder of a religion in me. Religion is a mob affair," he wrote.

Nietzsche practised philosophy as a fine art; and, as an artist, he was not concerned with results, with definitive things, with cold calculations. What he sought was style, "morality in the grand style," and as an artist he experienced and enjoyed the pleasures of unexpected inspiration. It may be a mistake to apply the word philosopher to such a man, for a philosopher is "the lover of wisdom." Passion can never be wise, and nothing was more alien to Nietzsche's mentality than to achieve the usual goal of the philosopher, to achieve a nice balance in the emotional sphere, to attain to repose, to "tranquillitas," to a satiated "brown" wisdom, to a fixed point where one could be convinced once and for

all. He "uses and discards" one conviction after another, and throws away his gains in the philosophical sphere. More appropriate to him would be the appellation "philaleth," a passionate lover of Aletheia, of truth, of the virginal and cruelly seductive goddess who never tires of luring her admirers into an unending chase, and finally remains inaccessible behind her tattered veils. Nietzsche did not envisage truth under a rigid and crystalline form, but as an ardent will to be true and to remain true; it was not for him the ultimate term of an equation, but a perpetual ascent towards a higher power, towards the greater tension of his vital feeling, towards the exaltation of life in the utmost plenitude. He did not want to be happy but to be true. Nine-tenths of philosophers seek rest. Not so Nietzsche. He, as the slave and servant of the daimon, sought excitement and movement pushed to an extreme. Such a fight for the inaccessible has a heroic quality, and heroism almost invariably ends in the destruction of the hero.

Excessive claims for truth come into conflict with mundane affairs, for truth is implacable and dangerous. In the end, so fanatical an urge for truth kills itself. Life is, fundamentally, a perpetual compromise. How well Goethe, in whose character the essence of nature was so exquisitely poised, recognized this fact and applied it to all his undertakings! If nature is to keep its balance, it needs, just as mankind needs, to take up an average position, to yield when necessary, to concede points, to form pacts. He who presumes the right of non-participation, who refuses to compromise with the world around him, who breaks off relationships and conventions which have been slowly built up in the course of many centuries, becomes unnatural and anthropomorphic in his demands, and enters into opposition against society and against nature. The more such an

individual "aspires to attain absolute integrity," the more hostile are the forces of his epoch. If, like Hölderlin, he persists in the endeavour to give a purely poetical twist to an essentially prosaic existence, or if, following Nietzsche's example, he aims at penetrating into the infinitude of terrestrial vicissitudes, in either case such an unwise desire constitutes a revolt against the customs and rules of society, separates the presumptuous being from his fellow-mortals, and condemns him to perpetual warfare which, splendid though it may be, is foredoomed to failure. What Nietzsche named the "tragic mentality," the resolve to probe any and every feeling to the uttermost, transcends spirit and invades the realm of fate, thereby creating tragedy. He who wishes to impose one single law upon life, who hopes, amid the chaos of passions, to make one passion (his own peculiar passion) supreme, becomes a solitary and in isolation suffers annihilation. If his actions are unconscious, he is merely a foolish dreamer; if he is aware of the danger and nevertheless faces that risk defiantly, then he is a hero. Nietzsche was undoubtedly a passionate seeker after truth, but he knew very well what he was about. He recognized the peril which confronted him; from the outset, from the moment when he first put pen to paper, he saw that his thoughts were gyrating around a menacing and tragical focus, that his life was beset with pitfalls. But, as a hero in the realm of thought, he loved life precisely because it was dangerous and annihilated his personal existence. "Build your cities on the flanks of Vesuvius!" he exclaimed, addressing the philosophers in the endeavour to goad them into a more lofty consciousness of destiny; for the only measure of grandeur is, according to Nietzsche, "the degree of danger at which a man lives in relation to himself." He only who stakes his all upon the hazard has the possibility of winning the in-

finite; he only who risks his life is capable of endowing his earthly span with everlasting value. "Fiat veritas, pereat vita"; what does it matter if life be sacrificed so long as truth is realized? Passion is greater than existence, the meaning of life is of more worth than life itself.

Little by little Nietzsche clarified this idea, giving it mighty expression so that in the end it outdistanced his own fate. "We all of us would rather see mankind perish than witness the destruction of knowledge." The more he comes to recognize how full of peril is his lot, how closely suspended over his head the thunderbolt which is to kill him, the greater is his joy in battle. "I know my fate," he cried on the eve of his collapse. "On a day to come my name will be associated with something quite out of the ordinary, with a crisis such as the world has never heretofore experienced, with the profoundest clashes in the conscience, with a decision entered upon in defiance of all that has so far been held sacred and as an article of faith." Nietzsche loved this abysmal depth of knowledge, and his whole being went forth to meet the deadly resolve. "What dose of truth is man capable of enduring?" This intrepid thinker was constantly putting the question to himself. But in order to find an answer, Nietzsche had to step beyond the bounds of safety and to reach the zone where a man is no longer secure, wherein ultimate knowledge proves deadly, wherein light is so near that the eyes are blinded. The last few steps he took into this sphere were the most unforgettable and the most impressive in the gamut of his destiny. Never before had his mind been more lucid, his soul more impassioned, his words more tipped with joyful music, than when he hurled himself in full consciousness and wholeheartedly from the altitudes of life into the abyss of annihilation.

TRANSFORMATIONS IN SEARCH OF THE TRUE SELF

A snake which cannot slough its skin is doomed to perish. So likewise, a mind which is prevented from changing its opinions ceases to be a mind.

Martinets, though as a rule they are blind where originality is concerned, possess an infallible instinct for detecting things that are inimical to themselves. Thus, long before Nietzsche had shown himself the amoralist he proved to be, these lovers of "order" sensed in him a foe. He made them feel uneasy. He was an outsider, a mongrel philosopher, a second-rate philologist, revolutionary, an artist, a musician, a man of letters. From the outset, the specialists took a dislike to him as a jack-of-all-trades. When Nietzsche's first work on philology was published, Wilamowitz, who his life long remained a professor of philology and nothing more, took his young colleague to task for having overstepped professional limits. Yet Nietzsche was destined to achieve immortal fame. The Wagnerians mistrusted his panegyrics upon the master, the philosophers looked askance at his ideas upon cognition. Before he had emerged from his philological chrysalis and had grown his wings, Nietzsche found the experts arraigning him. Richard Wagner, alone, a genius himself and an initiate of change, loved his future enemy in the developing youth. All the others felt him to be a dangerous being, too audacious and far-reaching in his suppositions. They suspected that he would not remain faithful to his initial convictions; they dreaded his unre-

strained freedom. Even today his authoritative sayings scare our specialists and make them wish to shut the "outlawed prince" into a "system," a "doctrine," a "religion," or a "message." They would like to have him safely pigeonholed in a specific conception of the universe. But Nietzsche showed as much licence towards himself as towards things in general. A definite attitude of mind wherein there could enter no contradiction was what he dreaded above all things. Yet this is precisely what people would fain impose upon him who is no longer able to defend himself. Their supreme desire appears to be to set this temperamental nomad on a pedestal in a temple, under cover; he who never had a permanent roof over his head during his lifetime and never wanted any such thing.

But it is impossible to cage Nietzsche in a specific doctrine; he cannot be pinned down to one set of convictions. Nor have I in these pages endeavoured to extract, schoolmaster-fashion, from out of one of the most moving tragedies of the mind, a "theory of cognition," a "system of epistemology." Nietzsche was a passionate advocate of the relativity of values, and never made a foible of consistency, never clung to any word his lips had uttered or to any previous conviction. He did not consider himself bound in any way. "A philosopher must utilize and consume convictions" is his answer to those who, once having arranged their thoughts to their satisfaction, are henceforward satisfied to stew in their own juice, and plume themselves upon their steadfastness.

Each of Nietzsche's convictions formed a period of transition. Even his proper self, his skin, his body, his mental equipment were never more in his eyes than a multiplicity, a "meeting-place for numerous souls." One of his most challenging sayings runs: "It is a great disadvantage for a

thinker to be tied to one individuality. When a man has succeeded in finding himself, he should try from time to time to lose himself again, and then to seek and find himself once more." He was ceaselessly undergoing transformation, ceaselessly losing himself and finding himself anew; that is to say, he underwent an everlasting process of becoming, was never rigid, never at rest. Hence his precept: "Become the person you really are." In the same sense Goethe was fond of repeating whimsically that he was always at Jena when people sought him at Weimar; and Nietzsche's favourite metaphor concerning the snake sloughing its skin was used a century earlier in one of Goethe's letters. But what a contrast between Goethe's deliberate evolution and Nietzsche's eruptive metamorphoses! Goethe's life expanded around a fixed point, just as year by year a circle invisible to the outer world is added to the trunk of a tree. The tree may shed its bark, but the core is sound, the limbs are strong, its growth is ever more lofty, its view increasingly wide. Patiently, thanks to an active though stubborn concentration of his energies, Goethe attained his maturity; he resolutely guarded his ego while defending his proper growth. Nietzsche's development, on the other hand, was spasmodic and violent owing to the impetuosity of his will. Goethe's enlargement was effected at no sacrifice of his true being; he was never called upon to deny himself in order to rise to higher things. Nietzsche, the changeable, was perpetually obliged to destroy himself that he might reconstruct himself wholly. His spiritual gains, his fresh discoveries, were the result of self-inflicted tortures, of lost faiths, of decomposition. If he wished to attain to more exalted peaks, he was constrained to discard a part of himself; whereas Goethe sacrificed nothing, merely transforming and distilling his individual elements.

In the kaleidoscopic universe he created, nothing was allowed to remain fixed and uncontested, and it is for this reason that the phases of his own development did not succeed one another smoothly and amicably but were invariably filled with hostility. Throughout life, he trod the road to Damascus. He did not change his belief once merely, but many, many times, for a new spiritual element did more than penetrate his mind, worrying its way into his vitals. Moral and intellectual knowledge was transformed in him, modifying his circulation, changing his feelings, giving an unexpected trend to his thoughts. Like a gambler who stakes his entire fortune upon a single cast, Nietzsche—like Hölderlin—"exposed his whole soul to the destructive force of reality." From the start, therefore, his experiences and his impressions were similar to volcanic eruptions.

When, as a student in Leipzig, he read Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*, he was unable to sleep for ten days. It was as if a cyclone had passed over him. All the beliefs which had seemed fixed and stable were shattered in the tumult of his spiritual storm. Gradually, as he emerged from the ruins and got a grip of himself once more, he grew aware that his mental world had completely changed and that he possessed a totally new outlook on life. In much the same way his meeting with Richard Wagner was the beginning of a passionate friendship which led to an unending enlargement of the range of his sensibilities. On returning to Basel from Triebschen he discovered that life held a new meaning for him: betwixt night and morning the philologer had died, and the backward look into the historic past yielded place to a forward look into the future. Precisely because his affection for Wagner was so overwhelming did the subsequent rupture of amicable relations wound Nietzsche so profoundly.

Each of Nietzsche's spiritual earthquakes destroyed the whole edifice of his convictions, and the philosopher was obliged to start building anew from the foundations. Nothing ever grew quietly and imperceptibly and naturally within him; his inner being was never given a chance to develop and extend by a process of stealthy labour. Invariably he is struck "as if by lightning"; always his universe must be annihilated in order that the new cosmos may emerge. In him, the explosive force of the Idea was unparalleled. "I should like to be freed from the expansions of feeling that bring such things in their train," he wrote one day. "It has often occurred to me that I shall suddenly die during one of these explosions."

Nor was his surmise greatly exaggerated, for, with each of his resurrections, something did actually die within him, was actually and irremediably lacerated as though a knife had been plunged into his antecedent relationships. The fires of a new inspiration burned the spiritual habitation he had been at pains to construct, and left not a wrack behind. His process of growth was accompanied by the tortures of martyrdom; in his search for his own personality he bled himself wellnigh to death. His books might almost be described as case-histories of these innumerable operations, as commentaries upon his methods of vivisection, as a treatise on the means by which the free spirit is brought into the world. "My books tell the story of the victories I have gained over myself." They relate his manifold transformations, his spiritual pregnancies and lyings-in, his deaths and resurrections; they are tales of the merciless warfare he carried on against himself, the punishments and summary executions he inflicted upon his own being; they are the biographies of all the creatures Nietzsche impersonated during the twenty years of his mental existence.

What makes Nietzsche's transformations so peculiar is that they seem retrogressive. If we take Goethe as the prototype of an organic nature in harmony with the forward march of the universe, we perceive that his development is symbolical of the various ages of life. In youth he was fiery and enthusiastic; as a man in his prime he was actively reflective; age brought him the utmost lucidity of mind. His mental rhythm corresponded in every point with the temperature of his blood. As with most young men, he began in chaos and ended his career in orderly fashion, as is seemly with the old. After going through a revolutionary period he turned conservative, after a phase of lyricism he became a man of science, after being prodigal of himself he learned how to be reserved.

Nietzsche took an opposite course. Instead of aspiring to an ever more complete integration of his ego, he desired complete disintegration. As he advanced in years he became increasingly impatient, vehement, revolutionary, and chaotic. His outward aspect was in strident opposition to the customary evolution of a man. While his university companions were still delighting in the usual horseplay of undergraduates, Nietzsche, though but twenty-four years old, was already a professor, aspirant to the chair of philology at Basel, that famous seat of learning. At twenty-four, Nietzsche's intimates were men of fifty and sixty years of age, sages such as Jakob Burckhardt and Ritschl, while his closest friend was the most celebrated artist of the day—Richard Wagner. He deliberately put the brake upon his poetical aspirations and upon his love of music. Like any other pedant, he sat over his Greek texts, revising pandects, and compiling erudite indexes. From the outset, Nietzsche's eyes were turned towards the dead past. Old before his time, a confirmed bachelor, he had no true joy in life. Pro-

fessorial dignity swamped his cheerfulness, dimming what should have been his natural exuberance. He was wholly immersed in printed texts and in dryasdust problems.

His first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, was completed when he was twenty-seven. Herein he breached into the present, though his face was still wearing the mask of a philologist. Nevertheless, the reader is aware of the promise of future fires, has an intimation that the author is conscious of the present and is vulnerable to artistic passion. At the age of thirty, when most men are starting life, when Goethe became a minister of State, and when Kant and Schiller were full-fledged professors, Nietzsche had kicked over the traces of his official duties and, with a sigh of relief, had quitted the chair of philology at Basel University. Now at last he came to grips with himself, seeking to penetrate into his personal universe, undergoing an initial transformation, rupturing old ties, and making his début as an artist. This initial step into the realm of the present was the moment when the real Nietzsche was born, the tragical Nietzsche with gaze fixed upon the future, with yearnings focused upon the New Man whose advent was prophesied. Meanwhile, having precipitately leapt from philology to music, from gravity to ecstasy, he passed on from scientific patience to the joyful dance. By the time he had reached his thirty-sixth year, Nietzsche had become an outlaw, an amoralist, a sceptic, a poet, a musician. He had regained "a better youth" than had been his lot in earlier days, had thrown off the shackles which bound him to the past, had freed himself from his own science, refusing to allow the present to put claims upon him, and thereby pledging himself heart and soul to companionship with the man who was to be.

Thus instead of, as is the case in a more normal artist, the years of development serving to stabilize his life, making it

systematic and serious in tone, they liberated Nietzsche more and more. Such a course of rejuvenation is almost unprecedented. Having reached his fourth decade, Nietzsche's language and his thoughts, his whole being, indeed, possess a freshness, a colour, a fearlessness, a passion, and a music he had never known as a lad of seventeen. The recluse of Sils-Maria had a lighter touch, his words soared on freer pinions, his feet danced more joyously through his works than had those of the prematurely old professor of twenty-four summers. The sense of vitality, far from quieting down, became livelier; his metamorphoses were swifter, more varied, more tensed, more defiant and cynical; he could find no halting-place for his restless mind. Hardly had he settled down somewhere when he felt his "skin chapped and rent." In the end, his life's pace was no longer capable of keeping up with the mutability of his mind, and his mental processes took on certain characteristics of the latter-day "movies," wherein repose is unknown. His intimates of earlier years, having rooted themselves firmly in their scientific careers, their opinions, and so forth, were at every fresh encounter amazed by Nietzsche's erratic evolution, and discovered new features in his mental physiognomy. He himself felt as if he were confronting a ghost when someone referred to "Professor Friedrich Nietzsche of Basel"; it was hard enough even to remember that he had been such a person twenty years before. Has any human being, before him, made so trenchant a cleavage between past and present? Does not this severance account for the terrible solitude of his latter days? He had broken all the links which attached him to the past, and the furious rhythm of his life and of his ultimate transformations was too ardent for him to create new ties. At top speed he flew by mankind and every other phenomenon, and as he drew nearer—or

seemed to draw nearer—to his real self, the intenser grew his desire to escape from himself.

As change succeeded change they became more violent and more painful. At first Nietzsche merely "divested" himself of his infantile beliefs and of a youth's convictions; this was as easy as it is for a snake to slough its skin. But as he grew expert in psychological processes he found he had to cut a path into the deeper layers of his consciousness; he was forced to become, as it were, his own executioner. In the end his constant self-vivisections laid bare the innermost zones of his sentient being—and these are dangerous operations to embark upon. His ruthless amputation of the Wagner complex proved to be an extremely perilous surgical intervention, one that was almost fatal, because it came so very close to the heart. It approximated to suicide and, by its sudden and relentless violence, took on the quality of a lust-murder, since at the moment of supremest intimacy Nietzsche's savage instinct for truth made him violate and throttle his nearest and dearest friend. There was something voluptuous in Nietzsche's cruel delight at his innumerable autos-da-fé of ideas he had come to regard as heretical. Little by little the instinct towards self-destruction became an intellectual passion. "I know the joy of destruction to a degree which harmonizes with my power to destroy." His transformation of himself gave rise to a desire to contradict himself, to become his own antagonist. One part of his books is in vehement opposition to another part; every "yes" is contraposed to a "no," and every "no" to a "yes." He stretched the poles of his being into the infinite in order to enjoy the electrical tension which was engendered between the two extremes. He fled from himself in order to catch up with himself; he was "the soul fleeing from itself and which seeks to overtake itself in the widest possible sphere."

This led him in the end to an excitability of mind which bordered on madness and had fatal results. For, precisely at the moment when the form of his being was stretched to the utmost, his mental tensions culminated in disruption. The primitive and daimonic power exploded, annihilating the superb series of incorporations which he had created from his own blood and out of his own life while storming the hidden battlements of the infinite.

DISCOVERY OF THE SOUTH

We need the South at any price; we need limpid, innocent, joyous, happy, and tender intonations. . . .

"We are the aeronauts of the mind," Nietzsche announced one day, wishing to vaunt the liberty of thought which finds new avenues in the limitless and unexplored ether. And in very fact his excursions into the infinite took place in the upper, frontier-free spheres of the spirit. Like a captive balloon from which ballast is perpetually being thrown in order to allow it to rise higher and higher, Nietzsche jettisoned his attachments and convictions so as to reach the topmost altitudes of mental activity and thus obtain a wider and more magnificent panorama, an individual perspective exceeding the bounds of time. Again and again did his aerostat veer this way and that ere it was shattered in the final tempest.

But there was one moment in Nietzsche's life that was of peculiar symbolical significance. It was the dramatic moment when the last cable was cut and the aeronaut passed from immobility to freedom, from earthly ponderousness into an imponderable element. This moment was the day when he left his moorings in Basel, renounced his professorship, his career, and shook the dust of the German-speaking world from his feet, never to return to his native land except on a flying visit and in a mood of superlative contempt. Everything that had happened to Nietzsche until that moment was of little importance so far as the historical personality of the man was concerned. His first metamorphoses

were no more than attempts to know himself better. Had the decisive step towards freedom been lacking, he might, for all his intellectual endowments, have remained a professor, a specialist, a man who reaps his laurels in a limited circle, whom we respect though he brings no revelation as to our spiritual universe. What made of Nietzsche a prophetic figure and transformed his destiny into legendary wonder was the fact that his daimonic nature was given free rein; his intellectual passion was allowed to express itself without let or hindrance; and his elementary urge towards liberty could find a congenial outlet. Since my object is to portray Nietzsche's life, not as a biography but as a tragedy of the spirit, as a work of dramatic art, for me his true work began when the artist in the man was released and became conscious of enfranchisement. So long as Nietzsche remained in his professorial chrysalis he was nothing more than a problem for professorial brains to cudgel themselves over. But the winged being, "the aeronaut of the mind," belongs to the realm of creative intelligence.

Nietzsche's first journey as an aeronaut of the spirit was directed towards the South, and this remained the parent metamorphosis of all his subsequent changes. In Goethe's career, too, a trip to Italy was a turning-point, a decisive cæsura in the line of his life; he, likewise, sped southward in order to discover his true self, to pass from bondage into liberty, from a vegetative existence into a world of creative experience. In Goethe, too, when for the first time he crossed the Alps and beheld the splendour of the Italian sun, a change took place with eruptive violence. "I feel as if I had just returned from an expedition to Greenland," he wrote. He, too, was made ill by the grey skies of a German winter; he, too, with his sunny nature and his craving for light and clarity, felt as though an inner spring of emo-

tion had been tapped and was now bubbling up to the surface of his being, he felt expanded and freed, he felt the need for a new and more personal liberty. But unhappily for Goethe the South revealed itself too late. His first journey to Italy took place when he was approaching forty; a hard rind had formed around his character, which was essentially of a methodical and reflective kind; a part of his being, of his thought, had remained behind at Weimar, was lingering around his home, the court, his dignities, his functions. He had become so firmly crystallized within himself that no element in the world was henceforward capable of completely modifying him. Besides, he was not a man to permit of outside forces mastering him; Goethe always wished to be the ruler of his own destiny, and permitted external things to influence him only within certain very definite limits.

Nietzsche, Hölderlin, and Kleist, on the other hand, were spendthrifts and gave themselves up heart and soul to every impression, happy when the new experience hurled them back into the scalding waters of the river of life. In Italy, Goethe found what he was in search of and very little else: he sought profounder interconnexions, where Nietzsche sought higher freedom; he evoked the glorious memories of the past, where Nietzsche looked towards a glorious future enfranchised from all that pertains to history; he was concerned with things dead and buried—classical art, the Roman spirit, the mysteries of plant and stone—whilst Nietzsche's gaze was aloft, his eyes delighting in the sapphire skies, in the clear and infinite horizons, in the magical sensation of this luminosity flooding him through every pore. Goethe's impression of Italy was, therefore, a mental and æsthetic affair, whereas Nietzsche's was vital in the extreme: the former brought home with him an artistic

style, whilst the latter discovered in the land of the sun a style of life. Goethe was merely fecundated, whereas Nietzsche was completely uprooted, transplanted, renewed.

Goethe, indeed, felt the need of renewal, writing: "It would undoubtedly be better were I never to return home if I cannot go back with life renewed"; but, like everyone who has become partly benumbed, he was capable of subjecting himself only to "impressions." The man of forty was already too encrusted, too much an authority unto himself, and above all too unwilling to permit of so radical and complete a change's taking place within him as Nietzsche, when his day came, accepted with exultation. Goethe's strong and solid instinct for self-preservation, which in his latter years became rigid as a cuirass about him, could not yield more than an exiguous place to change within his stable world. Wise and abstemious in all things, he absorbed only that which he deemed profitable to his nature, thus proving his fundamental opposition to the Dionysian disposition, which takes everything in excess of its needs and is constantly flying in the face of danger. Goethe's one desire was to enrich his own nature by contact with outer phenomena, but he never wished to lose himself in their depths until he was transformed by them. We are not astonished, therefore, when we read his summing-up of his impressions of Italy, to find that his words are chosen with care, that he is reticent of his thanks, and, in the end, stands on the defensive. "Among the many laudable things I have learned in the course of this journey is the fact that it is impossible for me to live alone and away from my own country."

Turn this dictum the other way about and we get substantially the effect the South produced upon Nietzsche. His conclusions are diametrically opposed to Goethe's, since he finds that henceforward he can live only in solitude and

away from his native land. Goethe, after making an instructive and interesting journey, returns to the exact point whence he took his departure, carrying in his boxes, his heart, and his brain things precious and delightful for a home, for his home in particular. But Nietzsche expatriates himself and finds his true self, the "outlawed prince," happy at having no home, no possessions, cut off for ever from the "parochial interests of a fatherland" and released from "patriotic strangulation."

From then onward Nietzsche's mind was enthralled by the idea of "the good European," of the man who is fundamentally a nomad, "a supra-national type of individual" whose inevitable advent Nietzsche felt in the air. So far as Nietzsche was concerned, a man of intelligence made his home, not in the country of his birth—for birth belongs to the past, is mere history—but in the place where he himself is father, engendering and bringing life into the world. "Ubi pater sum, ibi patria." The inestimable gift he brought away from the South was the awareness that the whole earth was simultaneously a foreign land and a mother country, where there were no frontiers, but only the endless open horizons on every side and as far as eye could see. Goethe, conversely, according to his own words, imperilled his personality while at the same time safeguarding it by encircling himself "with closed horizons."

Having thus come to rest "in the South," Nietzsche ever after found himself beyond the tentacles of his past, he degermanized himself just as he had thrown off the professorial trappings and had rid himself of Christianity and morality. Nothing could be more characteristic of his excessively impulsive and forward-going nature than the fact that he never took a backward step, and never cast a wistful glance into the past. This navigator upon the seas of the

future was far too happy at having set sail "by the directest route to Cosmopolis" for him ever to suffer from homesickness, or to wish to be in a land where but one language was spoken, a land which was unilateral and uniform. It is an error, therefore, and one that is common today, to try to re-germanize Nietzsche.

Once a freeman, always a freeman. Having felt the limpid Italian sky over his head, Nietzsche could no longer bear a suggestion of "obscurity," whether proceeding from the clouds or from a professorial chair, from the Church or from the army. His lungs, his "atmospheric nerves" were no longer able to suffer the smart of a northerly wind, and revolted at the idea of having to put up with the German climate; closed windows and doors were henceforward impossible to him; he felt life no longer worth the living in mental fogs and twilights. To face truth frankly was for Nietzsche to be perfectly clear-thinking, to envisage things broad-mindedly, to draw precise outlines into infinite space. Having made lucidity his idol, having imparted to the trenchant light of the South the attributes of divinity, he refused ever again to have truck with "the peculiarly German devil of obscurity." Now that he had adopted "the South" as his place of abode, he could see in German mental fare only that it was too heavy, "too indigestible," for a man of his refined appetite. Never again, so far as Nietzsche was concerned, would Germany be free enough and light enough as nourisher of the mind.

This sense of mental indigestion applied even to authors he had previously admired. He found Wagner's *Meistersinger* heavy, over-ornamented, baroque, with a futile assumption of jollity; Schopenhauer was mastered by a gloomy contempt for mankind; Kant left a bad taste in the mouth with his hypocritical State morality; Goethe seemed

weighed down by his dignities and offices, and had deliberately closed his horizons. But in his antagonism to all things German there was expressed not only the uneasiness of the intellectual before the edifice of what was at that time the mentality of the new, the all too new, Germany; not merely political discontent at the setting-up of the "Empire," of hatred for those who had replaced the German idea by the "ideal of the cannon"; not solely an æsthetic dislike for the Germany of the "plush furniture" and "victory columns in Berlin" period. Nietzsche's "lesson of the South" demanded clarity in all problems, not alone in those concerning the nations; he required that throughout the gamut of life precision and luminosity should prevail—"light, only let there be light shed upon even the vilest things"—supremest pleasure achieved by way of the plainest truth, a "gay science," a joyful wisdom far removed from the tragically dreary pedantry of the schools, infinitely remote from the patiently acquired erudition and objectivity of German professors, an erudition smelling of the fusty lecture-room and the study. It was not his mind which rose in revolt against the North, against Germany, against his homeland, but his heart, his nerves, his very fibres. His cry was a cry of delight at having at length "found the climate that suited his soul," at having discovered "freedom." That is why his exultation was so unbounded, that is why he exuberantly shouted: "I gave a leap!"—"I took a leap!"—"I escaped!"—"I have escaped!"

While the effect of his southern travels helped him to throw off Germany, it also helped him to throw off Christianity. As he lay basking in the sun, his soul aflame with the brightness, he began to ask himself what it was that had so long cast a shadow over the earth, rendering mankind uneasy, depressed, and pusillanimously conscious of sin;

had deprived the loveliest, the most natural, the most vigorous things of their values; and, in its decrepitude, had robbed the world of its most precious possession, namely, life. He came to see that the malevolent thing was Christianity with its belief in a life beyond the tomb; that this was the principle which cast a shadow upon the modern world. "Evil-smelling Judaism, a compost of rabbinism and of superstition," had ruined and suppressed the sensuality and merriment of the world. For fifty generations it had served to dope and demoralize mankind, to paralyse all that had previously constituted the vital force of the universe. His future mission in life was to crusade against the Cross and reconquer the holy places of man's realm, existence upon this earth. His "overwhelming sense of being alive" made him keen-sighted where mundane affairs were at stake, enabling him to perceive animal truth and immediacy—the things of here and now. On making this discovery he suddenly became aware for how lengthy a period "the healthy, red life" had been hidden away behind the incense fumes of morality. In the South, "in that great school of medicine for the healing of body and mind," he learned to be natural, to enjoy himself without remorse, to know what it was to lead a happy life unafraid of a coming winter, without the dread of God: in a word, he learned to affirm life instead of renouncing it. The revelation came from on high, not from an unseen God, but from the most candid and beneficent of mysteries, the mysteries of sun and light. "At St. Petersburg I should be a nihilist. Here I believe in the sun, instinctively, as does a plant." His philosophy had its roots in his liberated blood-stream. To a friend he says: "Remain in the South, were it only for faith's sake." Since clarity had become so sovereign a remedy, it could not fail to assume a divine quality, and indeed it was

henceforward sacred to him. In its name he marched forward to campaign against all that on earth constitutes a menace to clarity, to cheerfulness, to lucidity, against all that threatens to destroy the naked truth and the sun-intoxicated joy of life. "War to the knife against the present"—that was to be his attitude of mind for the days ahead of him.

Together with this supremely courageous way of approaching life, there entered into his soul a feeling of pride, violently disturbing the circulation of his blood, which had become adapted to the fusty atmosphere of the study and had consequently grown almost stagnant. Crystal-clear were the ideas that now gushed from his mind, sparkling like diamonds in the sunshine around him. His words seemed to belong "to the language of the wind which heralds a thaw," as he himself writes of the first book he composed in the South. There is a tone of forcible liberation pervading this work, a sense of release as when the ice breaks up and spring speeds across the land. Let the light enter into the abysses, let luminosity flood the tiniest nooks and crannies, let music be welcomed in every silence, let words be winged, while overhead the halcyon skies are limpidly radiant.

There is all the difference in the world between the lyrical style of this book and the more sombre style of those that preceded it. Granted, the latter were well written, well constructed, coherent; but they lacked life, seeming to be petrified. The new language he utilized was sonorous, joyful, supple and winged, liking free gestures and grimaces as do the Italians when they talk, instead of remaining motionless while speaking as do the Germans, whose bodies seem to take no part in the conversation. No longer is it the grave, frock-coated professor who speaks to us, the heir

of the German humanists. The thoughts of the reborn Nietzsche were culled by the wayside as he took his walks abroad; these children of freedom needed a free language wherein to find expression, a flexible language springing lightly forward, naked and agile as a gymnast, a language capable of running, leaping, rising in the air and dropping to earth again, of bracing its muscles, of dancing every conceivable step from those peculiar to the melancholy and reflective round dance to the wild madness of a tarantella, a language which could fearlessly voice every idea and every sensation. All that could be considered tame and domesticated in his style was swallowed up and gave place to a style which soared upwards by leaps and bounds, making use of jokes and word-plays on its way to the serenest altitudes, resounding at times with a note of tragedy as though with the booming of some ancient bell. Overflowing with fermenting energies, it resembled champagne, the beaded bubbles of his aphorisms sparkling at one moment and a foam of words spilling rhythmically the next. It was luminous with the solemn and golden light of old Falernian, magically transparent, sunny, and joyful. It seems to me that in no other German author was the style of his writing so swiftly and completely renewed. Certainly none other was so flooded with sunshine, or ever became so enfranchised, so essentially southern, so divinely light of foot, so full of a good vintage, so pagan.

To find a change as rapid we have to turn to a painter in search of a comparison. A similar miracle, wrought likewise by the sun of the South, took place in van Gogh. The passage from the lugubrious tints in brown and grey of his Dutch canvases to the violent, crude, and strident colours splashed so generously upon his pictures of Provence was just as eruptive a transition. Van Gogh's sudden mania for

sunlight, his sudden and complete transference from one style of painting to another, is the only analogy that comes to my mind in the least comparable with the illumination the South brought to Nietzsche's entire being. These two fanatical lovers of change were intoxicated with light, absorbed light with the vampire lust of passion, gulped down light in rapid and inconceivably large doses.

But Nietzsche would not have been a true son of the daimon if he had been satisfied and assuaged by any and every kind of intoxication; and he was, therefore, constantly in search of a superlative in relation to the South in general and to Italy in particular. Not satisfied with light, he desired "super-light"; clarity must be "super-clarity." Just as Hölderlin transferred his Hellas into Asia, that is to say, into the East, into barbarism, so in the end did Nietzsche's ecstasy become charged with tropical, with African frenzy. He wanted to be burned by the sun, not merely to be illuminated by it; clarity must have cruel teeth that bite; joviality must develop into a voluptuous orgasm. There arose in him an unquenchable desire to transform the delicate jingle of his senses into a veritable intoxication, to convert his dance into a flight, and to raise his ardent realization of life to a white heat. While such greeds were pulsating in his veins he found that language no longer sufficed his indomitable spirit. Language, in its turn, became too narrow a medium, too material, too ponderous. A new element was required for the Dionysian dance that had begun within him; he needed more far-reaching liberties than could be offered while he remained a thrall to the written tongue. He therefore turned back to his first love, to music. His most recent source of inspiration was the music of the South, a music wherein clarity engenders melody and

where the spirit acquires wings. He set out on his quest for this diaphanous music of the South, seeking it at all times and in all places, without ever finding what he sought. In the end he had to invent it.

FLIGHT INTO MUSIC

Come to me, cheerfulness, you golden one!

NIETZSCHE had always loved music, but this affection had remained latent, being constantly thrust aside by a yet stronger desire for a spiritual justification. As a boy he had delighted his friends with his improvisations, and in his youthful diaries we find frequent mention of his own compositions. But the more he devoted himself to the study of philology and, later, to philosophy, the more did he push this natural gift into the background, where it remained languishing and yearning to find expression. For him during his professorial days music was but an agreeable form of rest and recreation, on the same footing as the theatre, reading, riding, fencing, a kind of mental gymnastics for leisure hours. So well damned up were the springs of music that not a drop was able to seep through into his works. As he himself writes in *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music,* it is only as an object, as a spiritual theme, that music is of any use to him; and we are never allowed to hear any of its modulations in either his language or his poetry or his thoughts. Even his very early lyrics are lacking in musical feeling; and his attempts at composition were, in Bülow's opinion—and surely Bülow was a competent judge—no better than exercises in harmony, betraying an amorphous and typically unmusical inspiration. For many years music remained a private amusement to which he delivered himself up in a spirit of irresponsible pleasure, with the

pure delight of an amateur, a pastime altogether outside his main "mission" in life.

Music flooded his being only after the philological crust had been removed, only when his erudite objectivity of outlook had become disintegrated, when his cosmos had been shattered as if by a volcanic eruption. Then the sluices were opened and the waters broke forth in an amazing torrent. Music is prone to invade with cataclysmic force the souls of those who have been enfeebled by a recent spiritual earthquake, who have been subjected to violent tensions and rent in sunder by some terrible trial. Tolstoy had the experience, and for Goethe the same experience spelled tragedy. True, Goethe kept a watchful eye upon music; it disquieted him and made him reserved as did everything that smacked of the daimon; and in each of his metamorphoses he recognized that the tempter lay ambushed somewhere, ready to pounce. Nevertheless, for all his precautions, Goethe succumbed to music's charms in his moments of relaxation, when he was off guard, when his whole being was in a state of upheaval and on that account weak and accessible. On each occasion (the last being when he fell in love with Ulrike) when he was a prey to his emotions, when he was no longer master of himself, music burst through the strongest dam, drew tears from his eyes as tribute, and as a thank-offering a poem whose music was more enchanting than anything he had composed before. We all know that music requires of us a condition of feminine receptivity, it demands that we shall fling wide our doors to allow it free entrance, so that it may fecundate our feelings. At such a moment as this, music approached Nietzsche, just at a time when the South had forced wider horizons upon his vision, and he desired to live at the level of utmost ardour and passion. By a strange caprice of fortune music insinuated

itself into his life at the very moment when he was emerging from a peaceful existence and turning towards the tragical. He thought to give expression to the Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music and disclosed the exact opposite, namely the Birth of Music from the Spirit of Tragedy. The mighty surge of his new sensations could not be expressed in measured terms; it required some more powerful, some magical means: song. "O my soul, you needs must sing!"

Precisely because he had pent up these primal springs of his nature for so long behind the dams of philology, erudition, and indifference, did they gush forth so vehemently and penetrate into every crevice, irradiating and liquefying his literary style. It was as if his tongue, which had hitherto sought to explain tangible things, had suddenly refused its allotted task and insisted upon expressing itself in terms of music. The andante maestoso of his earlier works changed into a sinuous and flexible movement possessing the qualities of a genuinely musical idiom. The delicacies of touch we expect from a master of the art are there for the seeking: the crisp staccati of the aphorisms, the mezza voce of the hymns, the pizzicati of his mockery, the daring harmonization of his prose and his maxims. Even his punctuation—unspoken speech—his dashes, his italics, could find equivalents in the terminology of the elements of music. His German reads like an orchestral score, a prose sometimes written for a small band of players and at other times for a considerable company. An artist in language finds as much delight in the study of Nietzsche's polyphony as a musician in examining the score of a master composer. Numerous are the harmonies dissembled among the intentional discords; and limpid, indeed, is the spirit hidden behind the rich façade of tumultuous and disorderly words. The details of each work are vibrant with music, and the works as a

whole read like symphonies. They no longer belong to the realm of architecture, of intellectualized and objective creations, but are the direct outcome of musical inspiration. Of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* he himself says that it was written "in the spirit of the first phrase of the *Ninth Symphony*." And how better can I describe the opening of *Ecce Homo* than as a magnificent organ prelude destined to be played in some vast cathedral? "Song of the Night" and "Gondolier's Chanty" resemble the croonings of primitive men in the midst of an infinite solitude. When was his inspiration more joyous and dancing, more heroic, more like a lilting cadence of the Grecian music of antiquity, than in the pæan indited during his ultimate outburst of happiness, in the Dionysian rhapsody? Illuminated from on high by the pellucid skies of the South, soaked from beneath by the waters of music, his language became as it were a wave, restless and immense, and in this elemental sea Nietzsche was henceforward to live and labour until the whirlpool sucked him under and destroyed him.

But the impetuous influx of music did not blind Nietzsche to the danger that the raging cataract might carry him away from his task and leave him marooned on a desolate shore. Whereas Goethe "assumed a cautious attitude towards music," as Nietzsche once observed, Nietzsche himself went forward gallantly, scorning the peril. His system of defences was composed of "transmutations of values" and of changes of front. Thus, as with his ill-health, he converted a poison into a remedy. Music had to become something different from what it had been for him in earlier days. Then he required of it that it should tense his nerves to the highest pitch, that it should inject a cordial into his feelings, as Wagner's music succeeded in doing. Its intoxication was to act as an antidote to his life of placid erudition,

as a stimulant to his professorial sobriety. Now, when his thoughts led to an excessive expenditure of feeling, he needed music to function as a moral bromide, as a sedative. Intellectual activity having become intoxication, he no longer needed to be intoxicated; but music must bring him "holy sobriety," as Hölderlin so happily phrased it. "Music as a recuperation not as a stimulant," music as a refuge when his heart was lacerated or when the chase after ideas had overwhelmed him with weariness, music as a refreshing and cleansing bath, divine music descending from on high and not arising from a heart aflame, oppressed, and filled with a sultry atmosphere; a music which would help him to forget himself, not one which would thrust him back upon his own emotional crises; a music which would speak and act affirmatively; a music of the South, limpid as water, simple and pure; a music "any man could whistle." Not the sort of music which lay dormant within himself, the music of chaos, but the music of the seventh day of creation; a music of repose wherein the spheres serenely sing the praises of the Creator. "Now that I have reached a haven, give me music, and more music!"

The lightness of thistledown, this was Nietzsche's ultimate love, his highest measure of things. That which imparts buoyancy and health is good, whether it be food for the body or the mind, whether it be in the air, in the sun, in the landscape, or in music. That which enables a man to soar, which helps him to forget the weight and gloominess of life, the ugliness of truth—that is the wellspring of grace. On such a soil was nourished Nietzsche's belated love for art, a stimulant to life because it made life worth while. Music, limpid, freedom-giving, and light, became the dearest solace of Nietzsche's agitated mind. "Life without music is nothing but fatigue and error." A person sick of a fever

never stretched his cracked and burning lips towards a cup of cooling water with greater longing than, in his final crises, did Nietzsche towards the sparkling draught of music. "Was a man ever so athirst for music as I?" This was his final escape, escape from himself.

In view of this craving, we can have no difficulty in explaining his apocalyptic hatred for Wagner, whose art troubled the purity of the stream of music by pouring narcotics and stimulants into its crystalline waters; hence, likewise, the sufferings he endured when contemplating "the destiny of music," it seemed to him "an open wound." He, the solitary wanderer cast out by the gods desired only that they should not rob him of this one consolation, this nectar, this ambrosia which eternally refreshed and reinvigorated the soul. "Art, nothing but art! Art was given us that we might not be slain by truth." With the desperate energy of a drowning man he clung to art, to the only living power which is not subject to the laws of gravitation, hoping that this spar would save him and would bring him happily into port.

Music stooped graciously towards him, and received into her own hands the body of him who implored her aid in such moving terms. The world had forsaken him; his friends had long since gone their ways and ignored his existence; his thoughts strayed forth on interminable pilgrimages. Music alone walked by his side, accompanying him into his final, his seventh, solitude. All he touched, she touched with him; when he spoke, music lifted up her voice and sang with him; if he stumbled, she was quick to succour him. When in the end he fell into the abyss, she watched over his obliterated mind. Overbeck, coming into the room after the catastrophe, found the unhappy madman sitting at the piano, his fingers fumbling the keys in a vain effort

to find the harmonies so dear to him. During the long journey to Basel the sick philosopher sang without ceasing, sang his own "Gondolier's Chanty" to the accompaniment of the roaring and rattling rhythm of the train. In the valley of the shadows, when his mind was bedimmed, music remained his faithful companion, permeating with her daimonic presence the last days of his life and remaining with him till he died.

THE SEVENTH SOLITUDE

A great man is pushed and hustled and martyrized until he withdraws into solitude.

"O SOLITUDE, you are my home!" Such is the melancholy chant which issued from an icy world of silence. Zarathustra composed his evening song, the song of his home-coming. Has not solitude always been the dwelling-place of the wanderer, his cold hearth, his stony shelter? Nietzsche lived in many different towns; he travelled into countless realms of the mind; frequently he endeavoured to escape from solitude by crossing a frontier into a foreign land; but always his journeyings brought him back to solitude, heart-sore, weary, disillusioned.

During her constant roaming with this man of many transformations, she herself suffered a change, so that when he looked her in the face he was alarmed, for she had become so like himself in the course of these peregrinations, harder, crueller, more violent; she had learned to make another suffer and had grown threatening. Though he still continued to call her his "dear old solitude," the affectionate familiarity seemed out of season; his solitude had become complete isolation, the final, the seventh, solitude, wherein one is not merely alone but also forsaken. A void surrounded him, an awe-inspiring silence; no hermit or anchorite in the desert was ever more abandoned. They, at least, still had their God whose shade dwelt in their huts or fell upon the tops of their columns. But he, "the mur-

derer of God," had neither God nor man to companion him. To the extent that he drew nearer to himself, he receded from the world; and, as his voyages extended, "the desert widened" around him. Generally the works conceived and written in loneliness gain more and more ascendancy upon the minds of men; by a magnetic force they attract increasing numbers of admirers into the invisible circle of their influence. But Nietzsche's books alienated even his friends; each successive issue cost him the affection of some person who was dear to him. Little by little all interest in him and his writings was extinguished. The first to desert Nietzsche were his professorial colleagues, then Wagner and the Wagnerian coterie, then the companions of his youth. In Germany no publisher would any longer accept his manuscripts. During his twenty years of production, his manuscripts accumulated in a cellar and came to weigh many hundredweight. He had to draw upon his own slender resources in order to get his books printed. Not only did nobody buy the few volumes that were issued, but he found no readers when he gave them away. The fourth part of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was printed at Nietzsche's expense in forty copies only, and he intended to distribute them among his friends. But he could muster only seven people to whom to send the gift. Is not this sufficient proof of the man's loneliness? In order not to forfeit the friendship of Overbeck, the last remaining intimate of youthful days, he wrote apologetically: "Dear old friend, please read the book from beginning to end, and pray do not allow it to disturb you or alienate you. Summon all your kindness in my favour. If the work as a whole is intolerable to you, maybe you will yet find a hundred details to your liking."

Thus humbly did the greatest mind of the century petition his contemporaries to consider the greatest book of the

epoch; and the finest thing he could say of his most intimate friendship was that nothing had been able to disturb it, "not even *Zarathustra.*" Not even *Zarathustra!* So heavy a burden, so distressing an ordeal had Nietzsche's creative work become for his nearest and dearest, so vast was the chasm between this man's genius and the pettiness of the time. More and more did the air he breathed become too rarefied, too soundless, too emptied of commonplace interests, to be respirable by others.

This stillness made an inferno of Nietzsche's last, his seventh, solitude, against whose metallic walls he was knocking out his brains. Practically no reviewer or critic took the slightest notice of *Zarathustra,* which the author described as "the greatest gift ever bestowed upon men." One day he lamented: "After such an appeal as my *Zarathustra,* a cry that came from my heart, it is terrible not to hear a responsive word, to hear nothing, absolutely nothing, to be surrounded by silence, to be a thousand times more isolated than heretofore. This is a situation exceeding all others in horror; even the strongest might die under the strain. . . . And I am far from being the strongest. Sometimes it seems to me as though I were indeed wounded unto death." Yet what he asked for was not applause, agreement, renown. Quite the contrary! His bellicose temperament would have thoroughly enjoyed savage opposition, indignation on the part of his readers, disdain, even mockery. "For a man whose tensions are at breaking-point every emotion is wholesome so long as it is violent and passionate." Any kind of response would have been welcome, were it icy or heated or lukewarm, but at least a sign that he was alive and had a spiritual existence. His handful of friends behaved as badly as the critics and other strangers, vouchsafing no comment either in their letters or elsewhere,

avoiding outspoken opinions as something unpleasant. This gnawed at his vitals, undermining his proper pride, inflaming his self-assertive impulse, consuming his soul. Lack of recognition was the shaft which poisoned his isolation, and raised his temper to fever-heat.

The fever lurked in his veins like a smored fire beneath the turves, until at length it burst into flame. If we make a closer examination of Nietzsche's writings and letters of the years immediately preceding the final breakdown, we shall find that the blood was pulsating more violently as if at an excessive altitude. Mountain climbers have had experiences of the sort after reaching very great heights. In Kleist's last letters the same dangerous vibrations may be detected, the boiling and bubbling of a machine on the verge of bursting. Nietzsche's attitude of patience and calm yielded place to an access of nervous irritability. "Prolonged silence has exasperated my pride." At all costs he wanted a response, sending letter upon letter, telegram upon telegram, to his printers, urging them to push on with the job—as if the least delay would be a calamity. He had intended to finish his leading work *The Will to Power*, but he could no longer stick to his plan. Instead, he detached fragments of the book and hurled them like flaming brands into the midst of his epoch. The "halcyon tone" vanished; groans of suffering, cries of wrath, rose up from his impatient heart. He who had habitually shown the utmost indifference to his contemporaries now set about provoking them in the hope of forcing a reaction among them. *Ecce Homo*, a kind of autobiography, was a challenge to his time, for herein he recounted the adventures of his life with "a cynicism which will become part of universal history." He was daunted by a morbid anxiety lest he should fail to achieve success before he died. One feels as

one reads that he paused to take breath from time to time during the furious onslaught, in the hope of hearing a cry from those he attacked so savagely. Not a voice was raised. No reply reached him in his "azure solitude." At length he understood that no power, divine or human, was going to come to his assistance and rescue him from his isolation.

Blindly and wildly he flung his missiles far and wide, never looking to see if they hit the mark. Since he had slain the gods, he set himself up as a divinity. "Must we not become gods if we are to be worthy of such deeds?" Having overthrown all the altars, he built an altar for himself in order to praise himself, seeing that no one else would acknowledge him. He chanted his own dirge with enthusiasm and exultation, mingling it with songs celebrating his deeds and his victories. To begin with, a twilight covered the landscape of his mind as when black clouds stalk up from the horizon and distant thunder growls; then a strident laugh rent the sultry air, a mad, violent, and wicked laugh full of despair, heartbreaking: this was the pæan of *Ecce Homo*.

As the book develops, its cadences become increasingly spasmodic, the yells of laughter are more shrill amid the glacial silence; he is, as it were, outside himself. His hands are raised, his feet stamp rhythmically; he breaks into a dance, a dance over an abyss, the abyss of his own annihilation.

DANCE OVER THE ABYSS

If you look long into an abyss, the abyss, likewise, looks into you.

THE autumn of 1888, the period of Nietzsche's last creative outburst, is unique in the annals of productive artistry. Never before, in so brief a period, did any man of genius think so intensely, so uninterruptedly, so stupendously, and in so revolutionary a fashion. Never before had mortal brain been so fertile in ideas, so full of imagery, so flooded with music, as this brain whose doom was already decreed. The history of the mind offers no parallel for such an intoxication of destructive ecstasy conjoined with such a fury of creation—unless it be that in the same year and almost under the same skies we remember the activities of a painter similarly spurred to supreme activity by the onset of madness. In the garden at Arles and in the asylum, van Gogh was painting with equal swiftness, possessed with similar wonderful visions, endowed with the same maniacal superfluity. The instant one of his glowing pictures was finished, his unerring brush was at work upon a new canvas; there was no hesitation, no planning, no deliberation. Creation had become an overwhelming urge; he had a daimonic clarity and swiftness of insight, an unbroken succession of visions. Friends who had left van Gogh only an hour before would be amazed on their return to find that during their absence he had finished a new picture, and that, with ardent eyes, he was already at work upon a third. The daimon that was driving him would allow him

no rest, recking not a whit whether he was destroying the body of his victim.

Thus, too, did Nietzsche produce work after work, breathlessly, unrestingly, with the same unprecedented lucidity and swiftness. Ten days, a fortnight, three weeks, such were the incubation periods of his concluding works, their procreation, their carrying, and their birth all included. Completion seemed to tread on the heels of the first proposal. There was no search, no groping, no modification, and no correction. All was equally immaculate, definitive, unalterable, simultaneously hot from the forge and cool as tempered steel. Despite this extraordinary speed of production, we find no trace of labour or of effort. For a long time, now, his work had been effortless, laisser-faire —the uncontrolled operation of higher forces than those of the conscious mind. This man permeated with spirit need merely lift his eyes to discern (like Hölderlin in his last soaring towards mythical contemplation) vast epochs in the past and in the future; but Nietzsche made palpably clear all that he saw under stress of his translucent daimonism. He had only to stretch forth his hand in order to seize and to hold fast; and whatever he thus grasped was instantaneously made alive with metaphor, palpitating with music, marvellously inspired. Nor did the current of ideas and images stagnate for a moment during these truly Napoleonic months. It flowed on with elemental strength. "Zarathustra inundated me." Always, in this last phase, he speaks of an inundation, of his being whirled away as by a flood against which his conscious self could make no stand. For though Nietzsche says of his last writings: "Perhaps never before did anyone produce with such a superfluity of energy," he does not dare even to hint that the energy which animated him, which drove him on his frenzied

course, was his own. He knew himself to be intoxicated; to be inspired only as "the mouthpiece of a supramundane imperative"; to be possessed, as it were, by some daimonic being higher than himself.

But who can venture to describe this miracle of inspiration, the shuddering dread of this five months' unceasing storm of production, seeing that Nietzsche, in an ecstasy of thankfulness, has so vividly pictured his own experience? Let him speak for himself:

"Has anyone, at the close of the nineteenth century, a clear notion of what imaginative writers belonging to a stronger age than ours meant when they spoke of inspiration? I shall do my best to describe it. However little superstition may remain in one's mind, one hardly finds it possible to repudiate the idea of becoming the mere incarnation, the mere mouthpiece, the mere instrument of supremely powerful forces. The term revelation, in the sense that suddenly, with indescribable certainty and refinement, something becomes visible, audible, something that moves one profoundly and overwhelms one, is but a bald description of the facts. We hear, without seeking to hear; we accept, without knowing who bestows. A thought would come to me like a lightning-flash, determined in its form, unhesitatingly acceptable. I seemed to have no choice in the matter. A rapture whose intensity sometimes culminated in a storm of tears, a rapture in which one may involuntarily hasten at top speed for a while and then suddenly go dead slow; a complete release from the sense of personal identity to the accompaniment of the most distinct awareness of numberless fine bodily thrills extending into the tips of the toes; a passion of joy amid which the extremity of pain and the extremity of gloom do not seem to be contrasted elements, but conditioned, indispensable, the necessary colour-

tone of such a superfluity of light; an instinct of rhythmical relationships outstripping the widespread boundaries of established forms—such an expanse, such a need for a widely extended rhythm, is almost the token of a power of inspiration, a sort of compensation for its pressure and its tension. . . . All happens in the highest degree involuntarily, but to the accompaniment of a stormy conviction of freedom, of unconditionedness, of divine strength. . . . The involuntariness of the image, of the parable, is the strangest feature. One no longer has any idea of what is image or what is parable; everything presents itself as the most immediate, the most accurate, the simplest expression. To recall one of the sayings of Zarathustra, it would really seem as if the things came on their own account and offered themselves in the form of parable. 'Here come all things caressively at your summons, ingratiatingly; for they want to ride on your back. Here on every metaphor you ride to every truth. Here the words and word-cupboards of all being spring open to you; all being wants here to become word, all becoming wants to learn speech from you.' Such is my own experience of inspiration. I doubt not that I should have to go back thousands of years to find anyone who would say to me: 'It is also mine.' "

This self-addressed pæan of intoxicated happiness is, I know, regarded by modern physicians as a morbid euphoria, as the last pleasure in a decaying brain, as the stigma of that megalomania which is characteristic of the early stage of paralytic dementia. Still, I should like to ask them who else has with the same diamantine clearness chiselled for all eternity a description of creative frenzy? For such is the unexampled miracle of Nietzsche's last writings, that in them the utmost lucidity is accompanied by an extreme degree of somnambulist frenzy, that they display the wis-

dom of the serpent side by side with their bacchantic and almost bestial energy. Others affected with similar exaltation, others whose soul Dionysus has made drunken, have a heavy speech, and their words are shrouded in obscurity. They speak the confused language of dreams. Having glimpsed the depths of the abyss, they are wont to speak even in our world in an Orphic, a Pythian, a mysterious tone which confounds our senses and which the mind cannot fully understand. But Nietzsche talks clearly and incisively amid the ardours of intoxication. No other mortal, perhaps, has ever in full awareness and without a trace of giddiness leaned so far and seen so clearly over the edge of the precipice of lunacy. His mode of expression is not, like that of Hölderlin, like that of the mystics of all ages, that of one whose words darken counsel. On the contrary, never was he more lucid, never did he speak more plainly, than during the last hours before his mind was darkened. One might even say that his sense of mystery brought him an excess of illumination. No doubt the light that sparkles here is a perilous one. It has the phantasmal and morbid luminosity of a midnight sun glowing red above icebergs; it is a northern light of the soul whose unique splendour makes us shudder. It does not warm us, it terrifies us. It does not dazzle, but it slays. He is not carried away as was Hölderlin by an obscure rhythm of feeling, is not overwhelmed by the onrush of melancholy. He is scorched by his own ardours, is sunstruck by his own rays, is affected by a white-hot and intolerable cheerfulness. Nietzsche's collapse was a sort of carbonization in his own flames.

Long ere this, the excessive clarity of his vision had at times been an agony to him; in his clairvoyance, he had been affrighted by this luminosity and by the wild jubilation of his spirit. "The intensity of my feelings makes me

tremble and laugh." Still, nothing could stem the onrush of this tide, nothing could hinder the falcon swoop of thoughts which invaded his mind, clashing and glittering, day and night, night and day, hour after hour, while his temples throbbed to bursting. At night, indeed, chloral came to help him, gave him a feeble though protective roof of sleep to guard against the tumultuous downrush of his visions. But his nerves glowed like red-hot wires. His whole being was electrified, was atwitching, dazzling, scintillating light.

Is it to be wondered at that in these rapids of inspiration and vertiginous thought Nietzsche should have lost contact with earth and come to forget who he was? He, the illimitable, could not recognize his own limitations. Convinced, in this last phase, that his hand was guided by higher powers and no longer by himself, he hesitated to sign his name, Friedrich Nietzsche, at the end of his letters. The son of a Protestant pastor had long felt that a man of such humble origins could not be the bearer of such amazing things as he, Nietzsche, experienced. The creature who was thinking and recording these extraordinary thoughts must surely be a nameless martyr in humanity's cause. For that reason the signature of the final revelations was always symbolical: "The Monster," "The Crucified," "Antichrist," "Dionysus." In his own eyes he was no longer a man but an impersonal force, an apostolic missionary: "I am not a human being, I am dynamite"; "I am a historical event by which the history of our race is divided into two episodes." Thus does his megalomania, for it came to this, shout into a formidable silence.

Just as in burning Moscow, at the outset of the long Russian winter and backed up only by the pitiful remnants of what had been the mightiest of armies, Napoleon con-

tinued to issue thunderous proclamations, magnificent up to and beyond the border of absurdity; so did Nietzsche, in the midst of the flaming Kremlin of his brain, rendered impotent because the once-powerful legions of his thoughts had been scattered, fulminate in terrific pamphlets. He commanded the German emperor to go to Rome in order to be shot; he summoned the European powers to take united military action against Germany, to encircle his fatherland in a ring of iron. Never did apocalyptic wrath shout more savagely into vacancy, never did so glorious a presumption scourge a mind beyond earthly bounds. His words issued like hammer-blows striving to demolish the edifice of established civilization. The Christian era was to cease with the publication of his *Antichrist,* and a new numbering of the years was to begin; he set his own image upon a higher level than those of the great men who had preceded him. Even at the onset of paralytic dementia, Nietzsche's delusions were grander than the delusions of others whose minds had been darkened; here, likewise, there prevails the most illustrious though most dangerous excess.

"No one has written, felt, suffered in such a manner before; the sufferings of a god, a Dionysus." These words, penned when his mental disorder had already begun, are painfully true. The little room on the fourth floor, and the hermitage at Sils-Maria, not only sheltered the man Friedrich Nietzsche whose nerves were breaking under the strain, but also served as the places from which were issued a marvellous message to the dying century. The Creative Spirit had taken refuge beneath the attic roof heated by the southern sun, and was bestowing its entire wealth upon a timid, neglected, and lonely being, bestowing far more than any isolated person could sustain. Within

those narrow walls, wrestling with infinities, the poor mortal senses were stumbling and groping amid the lightning-flashes of revelation. Like Hölderlin, he felt that a god was revealing himself, a fiery god whose radiance the eyes could not bear and whose proximity was scorching. Again and again the cowering wretch raised his head and attempted to look upon the countenance of this deity, his thoughts running riot the while. Was not he who felt and wrote and suffered such unthinkable things, was not he himself God? Had not a god reanimated the world after he, Nietzsche, had slain the old god? Who was he? Who was Nietzsche? Was Nietzsche the Crucified; the dead god or the living one; the god of his youth, Dionysus; or both Dionysus and the Crucified—the crucified Dionysus? More and more confused grew his thoughts; the current roared too loud beneath the superfluity of light. Was it still light? Had it not become music? The narrow room on the fourth floor in the Via Carlo Alberto began to intone; the shining spheres made music; all heaven was aglow. What wonderful music! Tears trickled down his face, warm tears. What sublime tenderness, what auspicious happiness! And now, what lucidity! In the street, everyone smiled at him in friendly fashion; they stood up to greet him; the apple-woman selected the finest fruit for him; they made obeisance to him, the slayer of gods; they were all so delighted to see him. Why? Why? He knew. Antichrist had appeared upon earth, and men acclaimed him with hosannas. The world hummed with jubilation, was full of music. Then suddenly the tumult was stilled. Something, someone fell down. It is he, himself, in the street, in front of the house where he lodged. He was picked up. He found himself back in his room.

Had he been asleep for a long time? It seemed very

dark. There was the piano. Music! Music! Then, unexpectedly, people appeared in the room. Surely one of them must be Overbeck. But Overbeck is in Basel; and where is he, Nietzsche? He no longer remembers. Why does the company look at him so strangely, so anxiously? He is in a train, rattling along the rails, and the wheels are singing; yes, they are singing the "Gondolier's Chanty," and he joins in, sings in an interminable darkness.

He is in a strange room, and always it is dark. No more sunshine, no light at all, either within or without. People talk in the room. A woman among them, surely it is his sister? He had thought she was travelling. She reads aloud to him, now from one book, now from another. Books? "Was not I once a writer of books?" Comes a gentle answer, but he cannot understand. One in whose soul such a hurricane has raged grows deaf to ordinary speech. One who has gazed so intently into the eyes of the daimon is henceforth blinded.

THE TEACHER OF FREEDOM

Greatness means, to give guidance.

"After the next European war, people will understand me." Such is the prophetic utterance that shines conspicuously forth from among Nietzsche's last writings. In very truth, the real significance, the historical necessity of this seer is made plain to us only in relation to the tensed, unstable, and dangerous condition of our world at the turn of the century. In this sensitive, who transformed every atmospheric convulsion from nerve into spirit, from intimation into word, there occurred a foreboding discharge of all the tensions of the morally obtuse Europe. There was a cataclysm in Nietzsche's mind as a presage of the most terrible cataclysm in human history. His "far-thinking" vision glimpsed the crises while others were comfortably warming their hands before the agreeable fires of well-turned phrases. He discerned the causes of what was about to happen: "The national cardiac pruritus and the blood-poisoning thanks to which, throughout Europe, nation shuts itself off from nation as if they were quarantining against one another's plagues." He saw "the nationalism as of horned cattle," of brute beasts whose highest conception was selfishness based upon a narrow interpretation of history, what time the impetus of all the forces in the making was already urging upon them a new and more sublime synthesis. Wrathfully he predicts catastrophe in view of the convulsive endeavours "to eternalize particularism throughout Europe" and to defend a

morality established upon egoistic interests and upon business. In letters of fire upon the wall he wrote: "This absurd state of affairs must speedily be brought to an end; we are skating upon very thin ice, and the warm breeze of a thaw is blowing."

No one heard more plainly than did Nietzsche the ominous cracking in the edifice of European society; no one, in a time of unwarranted optimism and self-satisfaction, sounded so loudly as he the summons to flight—a flight into straightforwardness, into clarity, into the utmost intellectual freedom. No one felt so strongly as he that the old order was decayed and done with, and that, amid death-dealing crises, a new and mighty order was about to begin. Now at length we know it, as he knew it decades ago.

Such agonizing foresight was his greatness and his heroism. The incredible stresses which ultimately shattered his anguished mind linked him with a higher element; it was the fever of our world before the abscess burst. Stormy petrels invariably herald momentous convulsions and catastrophes; and there is a spiritual truth underlying the belief of simple souls that before wars and crises comets pursue their erratic course athwart the sky. Nietzsche was such a beacon in the upper atmosphere, the summer lightning that preludes a storm, the rumbling we hear from distant mountains before the thunder bursts in the valleys. He alone recognized how frightful a hurricane was about to disturb our civilization.

But it is the perennial tragedy of the spirit that what it perceives in its higher, more luminous spheres can never be communicated to those who dwell in the heavier atmosphere upon the lower levels; that the present never grasps what is impending, is never able to read the message of the

skies. Even the most translucent genius of the nineteenth century could not speak plainly enough to enable his contemporaries to understand him. No more was vouchsafed to him than the cry of warning which was incomprehensible to his contemporaries. Then his mind gave way.

To my thinking, however, it was Jakob Burckhardt, the most intelligent among Nietzsche's readers, who best divined his message when in a letter to his friend he wrote that the latter's books had "increased independence in the world." Note that this shrewd and well-informed critic expressly said "independence in the world" not "the independence of the world." For independence exists only for the individual as a unit, it cannot be indefinitely multiplied among the masses; it does not grow out of books or out of culture: "there are no heroic ages, but solely heroic persons." It is the individual who achieves independence within the world, and for himself alone. Every free spirit is an Alexander. Like a torrent he overwhelms provinces and makes vast conquests, but he has no heirs. The realm of freedom is invariably divided up among diadochi and satraps, among commentators and elucidators, who are enslaved by the written word. Nietzsche's independence did not therefore transmit, as the scholiasts declare, a doctrine, but, rather, an atmosphere—the limpid and passionate atmosphere of a daimonic nature, which finds vent in storm and destruction. When we open his books we encounter ozone-laden air, an element freed from dross, from nebulousness and sultriness; that which we breathe is fit only for strong hearts and emancipated spirits. Freedom is Nietzsche's ultimate significance, is the meaning of his life and the meaning of his overthrow. Just as, in the domain of natural forces, there is need at times for whirlwinds wherein the excess of energy rises in revolt against stability, so like-

wise, now and again, in the realm of mind is there need for a daimonic being whose transcendent powers shall make him the spearhead of a revolt against the triviality of habitual thought and the monotonousness of conventional morality. There is need of a man who will embody the forces of destruction and who will destroy himself likewise. But these heroic disturbers of the peace are sculptors of the universe no less than are those whose creative work is done silently and without the raising of a riot. These latter, doubtless, manifest the plenitude of life; but the destroyers show its immensity. It is through a study of tragical natures that we become aware of profundity of feeling. Only because there are some whom no yardstick can measure do the rest of us realize our own possibilities of greatness.

PART THREE

Adepts in Self-Portraiture

CASANOVA

STENDHAL

TOLSTOY

TO

MAXIM GORKY

INTRODUCTION

The proper study of mankind is man.
POPE

In the series of volumes whose general title is *Master Builders*, I am trying to analyze the distinctive types of the creative will, and to illustrate these various types by a description of personalities characteristic of each. This third volume of the series * is at once counterpart of the first and second, and their supplement. *The Struggle with the Daimon* showed Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche as so many variants of the tragic personality driven onward by elemental urges, by daimonic energy—as so many variants of the temperament which, in its movement towards the infinite, strides over itself and over the outer world. *Three Masters* contemplated Balzac, Dickens, and Dostoeffsky as types of epic world-shapers who in the cosmos of their novels create a second reality side by side with the real world known to us all. *Adepts in Self-Portraiture* takes us along a road which leads, not like *The Struggle with the Daimon* towards the infinite, and not like *Three Masters* into the real world, but back into itself. For the adept in self-portraiture, the aim is to disclose the microcosm of his own ego, rather than to depict the macrocosm, the plenitude of existence. Unconscious though it be, this is the purpose of his art; no reality is so important to him as the reality of his own life. Whereas the imaginative writer who creates new worlds beside the real world of objective experience, a writer whose gaze is fixed on the

* The first to be published in English.

outer world, the extravert, merges his ego so thoroughly in the objective that the ego is no longer discernible (Shakespeare is the supreme example)—the writer whose gaze is turned inward, the introvert, makes everything in the real world lead back into his own personality, so that his writings tend before all to be expositions of his own ego. No matter what form he may choose, the drama, the epic poem, lyric verse, or autobiography, he will unawares make his own self the medium and the centre of all his works, so that every one of them will primarily be an example of self-portraiture. The present volume is designed to expound the characteristics of these subjectively minded artists, and of autobiography as their typical method of expression.

I know that my readers will be startled rather than convinced to hear me utter in one breath these three names, Casanova, Stendhal, Tolstoy. What possible standard of values can be applied at one and the same time to an amoral rapscallion such as Casanova (to whom many would even dispute the title of artist), and to a man like Tolstoy, filled with heroic ethical purpose, and in addition a creative artist of the first rank? But when I put these three side by side in one book, I do not imply that they stand side by side on the same spiritual plane. On the contrary their names symbolize three levels which are superposed so as to represent successively higher species of the same genus; they represent ascending gradations of the same creative function, self-portraiture.

Casanova is the lowest, the primitive gradation. In him we have naïve self-portraiture, a simple record of deeds and happenings, without any attempt to appraise them, or to study the deeper working of the self.

In Stendhal, self-portraiture has reached a higher level,

the psychological. Here a simple report, a mere record of the curriculum vitae, is not felt to be adequate. The ego has grown inquisitive as to itself; it watches the mechanism of its own impulses; seeks the motives that actuate it in doing certain things and leaving others undone. A new perspective emerges, arising out of the binocular vision of the ego as subject and object, out of the twofold biography of the internal and the external. The observer observes himself; the one who feels, investigates his own feelings. The subjective, the mental life, has entered the field of vision, which is no longer completely occupied by the things of the outer world.

With Tolstoy, this spiritual self-contemplation attains its highest level, inasmuch as it has now become an ethico-religious self-portraiture. The keen observer describes his own life; the skilled psychologist records the reflex actions that are aroused by his own sensations: besides this, a new factor is at work, the inexorable eye of conscience. Every word is scrutinized as to its truth, every motive as to its purity, every feeling as to its persistent energy. Self-portraiture, transcending the frankly inquisitive phase of self-study, has become a moral self-questioning, a self-assize. When limning himself, the artist is no longer content to depict the kind and the form of his earthly manifestations; he wants also to ascertain their meaning and to appraise their worth.

Such a master in the art of self-portraiture can fill any kind of book with his own ego. But only in one kind can he express himself fully: in autobiography, in the comprehensive epic of the ego. Each strives unwittingly towards this form, and yet few attain it in perfection; of all the varieties of literary art, autobiography, being the most responsible, is the least often successful. It is seldom es-

sayed, so seldom that in the whole world there are scarcely a dozen autobiographies worthy of serious consideration. Rarest of all is the autobiography which takes the form of a profound psychological study; for a man of letters finds it hard to plunge from the familiar levels of straightforward literature into the deepest recesses of the soul.

At the first glance it might seem as if self-portraiture would be an artist's most spontaneous and easiest task. Whom does the imaginative writer know better than himself? Here is a personality whose every experience is familiar, whose secrets have all been revealed, whose most intimate chambers have been unlocked. With no further trouble than a probing of memory and a description of the facts of life, he will reveal "the truth." He will have little more to do than to raise the curtain which hides the stage from the public. Just as no gifts for painting are requisite for photography, the unimaginative and purely mechanical reproduction of a prearranged reality, so, it would seem, the art of self-portraiture does not need an artist at all, but only an accurate registrar. On that theory, anyone you please could be a successful autobiographer.

The history of literature shows, however, that ordinary autobiographers are nothing better than commonplace witnesses testifying to facts which chance has brought to their knowledge. A practised artist, one with eyes to see, is needed to discern the innermost happenings of the soul; few even of the accomplished artists that have attempted autobiography have been successful in the performance of this difficult and responsible task. The path by which a man must descend from the surface into the depths, from the breathing present into the overgrown past, is dimly lit and hard to follow. Bold, indeed, must be he who

would travel that path amid the abysses of his own personality, on the narrow and slippery slope between self-deception and purposive forgetfulness, down into the region where he is alone with himself, where (as when Faust went down to the Mothers) the impressions of his own life exist only as symbols of their former existence in the real world. How much patience and self-confidence he will need before he will be justified in saying the sublime words: "Vidi cor meum!" How arduous is the return from this innermost sanctuary to the conflicting world of literary creation, the return from self-contemplation to self-portraiture! If we want an index to the enormous difficulty of such an enterprise, we can find it in the rarity of success. We can count on our fingers the number of those who have achieved it. Even among autobiographies which draw near to perfection, how many gaps there are, how many hazardous leaps, how much padding and patchwork! Always, in art, that which lies nearest to hand is the most difficult; the undertaking one would have thought the most trivial proves the most formidable. Autobiography is the hardest of all forms of literary art.

Why, then, do new aspirants, generation after generation, try to solve this almost insoluble problem? Here an elemental impulse is at work, powerful as an obsession, the inborn longing for self-immortalization. Placed amid an unceasing flux, overshadowed by the perishable, doomed to perpetual transformation, swept away by the irresistible current of time, one molecule among milliards, we are all of us involuntarily spurred on by the intuition of immortality to seek an anchorage in something, no matter what, which shall outlast our ephemeral existence. Begetting and self-portraiture are, in the last analysis, nothing more than two different ways of expressing

the same primary function, the same endeavour to cut a notch that will endure for a while in the ever-growing tree of humanity. A self-portrait, therefore, is nothing more than the most intensive form of the will to perpetuate oneself; and early attempts in this direction still lacked the developed artistry of the picture, the elaborated aid of writing. Stone blocks set up over tombs; clay tablets on which, in clumsy, wedge-shaped characters, deeds of heroes were recorded; fragments of bark inscribed with runes—such are the forms in which the earliest self-portraits have come down to us across the void spaces of the millenniums. Long since have the deeds become unmeaning, and the language of those mouldering generations has grown incomprehensible. Unmistakably, nevertheless, the records betray the impulse which animated the men and the women who fashioned them, the impulse to portray themselves, to keep themselves in being, by handing down to posterity a trace of the individuality which might thus be preserved when life had fled. The obscure will to self-perpetuation is the elemental urge underlying and initiating every attempt at self-portraiture.

Long, long afterwards, when mankind had become more knowledgeable and more conscious of self, a further conation was superadded to the crude and vague impulse towards attesting that one has existed. Now the individual began to cherish a desire to become aware of himself as an ego, to explain himself to himself for the furtherance of the consciousness of self. When, as Augustine so well phrases it, a man "becomes a problem to himself," and sets out in search of an answer which will concern him alone among mortals, he unrolls the course of his life before himself like a map, that he may see that course more plainly and understand it better. At this stage, he does

not try to explain himself to others, for he wishes, in the first instance, to explain himself to himself. Here he reaches a parting of the ways (we reach it to-day in every autobiography) between the description of life and the description of experience, portrayal for others and portrayal for the writer's own sake, autobiography that is objectively directed and autobiography that is subjectively directed. Writers belonging to the former group have an impulse towards the public avowal. Confession is their characteristic method, confession before the whole world or confession to the pages of a book. Writers of the latter group are prone to soliloquy, and are usually content with writing diaries. Only persons endowed with an extremely complicated temperament such as Goethe, Stendhal, and Tolstoy, have tried to effect the thoroughgoing synthesis in this field, perpetuating themselves in both forms.

Self-contemplation, however, is nothing more than a preparatory step, and not a momentous one. Thus far, sincerity is easy. The artist's real torment does not come until the work of communication begins; not until then is a heroic candour demanded of the autobiographer. For no less elemental than the urge to be communicative, to let all our brethren know about the uniqueness of our personality, is the counter-urge towards secretiveness, manifesting itself in the form of shame. Just as a woman's innermost being tingles with the longing to surrender her body, while in the conscious she is animated with the desire to keep her body for herself, so the will to confession must wrestle with the spiritual modesty which counsels reserve. Even the vainest among us (above all, the vainest among us) feels that he is not perfect, not so perfect as he would like others to think him. For that reason he would fain keep his less amiable characteristics private, would like the

knowledge of his inadequacies and pettinesses to die with him, even while he wishes his likeness to live on among his fellows. Shame, therefore, is the perpetual adversary of sincerity. With flattering tongue she tries to dissuade us from describing ourselves as we really are, and advises us to depict ourselves as we should like people to see us. The artist may honestly resolve to be frank, but with feline artifice shame will lead him astray, will induce him to hide his most intimate self, to gloss over his defects. Under her promptings, all unawares, the draftsman's hand omits or embellishes disfiguring trifles (supremely important, in the psychological sense), or idealizes characteristic traits by an adroit distribution of light and shade. One who is weak enough to follow such promptings will not achieve self-portraiture; he will not get beyond self-apotheosis or self-defence. Honest autobiography, therefore, can never be a care-free narrative. Always the writer must be on his guard against the whisperings of vanity, must strenuously ward off the temptations to touch up the picture he is presenting to the world. For the very reason that nobody else can control the autobiographer's sincerity, that nobody but himself can hold him to account, he must have a combination of qualities which will hardly be found once in a million instances; he must be witness and judge, accuser and defender, rolled into one.

There is no armour of proof against self-trickery. However strong a cuirass we make, we can launch a bullet swift enough to pierce it, and the powers of self-deception can be intensified to cope with the powers of self-knowledge. However resolutely a man may bar the door against falsehood, she will creep in through a chink. If he study the lore of the mind that he may learn how to parry her onslaughts, she will discover a new and cleverer thrust

which will get in beneath his guard. Like a panther, she will crouch in the shadows, to spring upon him when he is most unprepared. The art of self-deception is refined and sublimated by the wider experience, by the growth in psychological knowledge, designed to avert self-deception. One who manipulates truth roughly, prentice fashion, will produce lies which are crude and easily recognizable. Not until a man has a subtle mind are his falsehoods subtilized, refined, so that they can be detected only by one as subtle as himself. When thus subtilized, they assume the most perplexing, the most illusive forms; and their most deceptive mask is invariably the semblance of honesty. Just as snakes prefer to lurk among rocks and boulders, so the most dangerous lies are hidden in the shade of seemingly heroic admissions. When you are reading an autobiography, and come to a passage where the narrator appears amazingly frank, attacking himself ruthlessly, it behoves you to walk warily, for the probability is that these reckless avowals, these beatings of a penitent's breast, are intended to conceal some secret which is even more dreadful. One of the arts of confession is to cover up what we wish to keep to ourselves, by boldly disclosing something far more tremendous. Part of the mystery of the sense of shame is that a man will more readily expose his most hideous and repulsive characteristics than bring to light a trifle that might make him appear ridiculous. In every autobiography, that which is above all likely to lead the writer out of the straight path is the dread of arousing the ironical laughter of his readers.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with a passion for self-revelation, trumpets his sexual irregularities. In the contrite vein, he deplores that he, author of *Emile,* the famous treatise on education, should have rid himself of his off-

spring by depositing them in the revolving box at the foundling hospital. Such frankness is suspect. The pseudo-heroic admission was, perhaps, a mask of inhumanity to hide something he found it impossible to acknowledge. The probability is that he never had any children at all, being incompetent to procreate them! Tolstoy, in his *Confession,* shrilly proclaimed himself whoremonger, murderer, thief, and adulterer; but he would not write a line acknowledging the meanness which made him treat his great rival Dostoeffsky so ungenerously. Gottfried Keller, who was familiar with this trick of raising the dust, wrote sarcastically about autobiography in general: "One autobiographer will acknowledge the seven deadly sins, and will conceal the fact that he had only four fingers on his left hand; another will sedulously describe the birthmarks on his back, while he is as silent as the grave concerning his conscience-pricks for having borne false witness. When I compare one with another and study their parade of sincerity, I am led to ask myself whether anyone is sincere, and whether sincerity is possible!"

To expect perfect sincerity in self-portraiture (or elsewhere) would be as absurd as to expect absolute justice, freedom, and perfection here on earth. The most passionate, the most resolute determination to be true to the facts is frustrated at the outset by the undeniable fact that we have no trustworthy organ of truth, that our memory cheats us before we can begin the work of self-portraiture. Memory is not in the least like a register kept in a well-ordered office, a place in which all the documents relating to every detail of our lives are laid away in store. What we vaunt as memory is submerged in the rushing stream of our blood; it is a living organ, subject to the mutations of such organs; it is not a cold-storage chamber, in which

every feeling can retain its natural essence, its original odour, its primary historical form. In this complicated flux to which in our haste we give the specious name of memory, events roll one over the other like pebbles in the bed of a stream, rubbing one another down till they become unrecognizable. They adapt themselves one to another; range themselves this way and that; show a perplexing talent for mimicry thanks to which they adopt shapes and colours conformable to the groundwork of our desires. Everything, almost without exception, undergoes distortion in this transformatory element. Every subsequent impression overshadows the earlier ones; every new memory modifies the old ones, and may sometimes actually reverse their significance.

Stendhal was the first to recognize this untrustworthiness of memory, and to acknowledge his own incapacity for recording his experiences with historical accuracy. A classical instance is his admission that he could no longer be certain whether the impressions persistent in his mind as to "crossing the Great Saint Bernard" were really vestiges of personal experiences on the famous pass, or memories of an engraving of the region seen by him at a later date. Marcel Proust, Stendhal's spiritual heir, gives an even more striking example of memory's capacity for distortion. In boyhood, he tells us, he saw "Berma" in one of her most famous roles. Before seeing her, his fancy had been full of anticipations, which had been merged in the subsequent real impressions of the actress; at the play, his impressions were influenced by the opinion of his companion, and next day they were further transformed by what he read in the newspapers. When, in after years, he saw Berma in the same part, both he and she having become different persons meanwhile, he was no longer

able to decide what had originally been his "true" impression.

Memory, ostensibly an infallible gauge of truth, is in reality an enemy of truth. Before a man can set himself to the description of his life, there must exist in him an organ competent to produce instead of reproducing; he must have a memory capable of exercising poietic functions, competent to select essentials, to emphasize and to slur, to group things organically. Thanks to this creative power of memory, every autobiographer must involuntarily become a romancer when he undertakes to describe his own life. Goethe, wisest among moderns, knew this. When choosing a name for his autobiography, he renounced the claim to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. "Dichtung und Wahrheit," poesy and truth, might serve as title for every volume of self-portraiture.

Nevertheless, though it be true that no one can tell the absolute truth about himself, and though everyone who writes his own life must perforce deal with the record imaginatively, the very attempt to be truthful demands supreme integrity in all who write confessions. No doubt the pseudo-confession, as Goethe called it, confession under the rose, in the diaphanous veil of novel or poem, is much easier, and is often far more convincing from the artistic point of view, than an account with no assumption of reserve. Autobiography, precisely because it requires, not truth alone, but naked truth, demands from the artist an act of peculiar heroism; for the autobiographer must play the traitor to himself. Only a ripe artist, one thoroughly acquainted with the workings of the mind, can be successful here. That is why psychological self-portraiture has appeared so late among the arts, be-

longing exclusively to our own days and to those yet to come. Man had to discover his continents, to fathom his seas, to learn his language, before he could turn his gaze inward to explore the universe of his soul. Classical antiquity had as yet no inkling of these mysterious paths. Caesar and Plutarch, the ancients who describe themselves, are content to deal with facts, with circumstantial happenings, and never dream of showing more than the surface of their hearts.

Before he can throw light into his own soul, a man must be aware of its existence, and this awareness does not begin until after the rise of Christianity. Augustine's *Confessions* breaks a trail for inward contemplation. Yet the gaze of the famous divine was directed, not so much inward, as towards the congregation he hoped to edify by the example of his own conversion. His treatise was a confession to the community, a model confession; it was purposive, teleological; it was not an end in itself, comprising its own answer and its own meaning. Many centuries were to pass before Rousseau (that remarkable man who was a pioneer in so many fields) was to draw a self-portrait for its own sake, and was to be amazed and startled at the novelty of his enterprise. "I am planning," he writes, "an undertaking which has no precedent. . . . I wish to present my fellows with the portrait of a man sketched with perfect fidelity to nature, and I am myself this man." With the credulousness of every beginner, he still supposes that the ego is "an indivisible unity," and that "truth" is something tangible and palpable. He is still naïve enough to fancy that when the last trump sounds he will appear before the Great Judge and say, pointing to the book in his hand, "This was I." We of a later generation no longer share Rousseau's simple faith. Instead, we have a fuller

and hardier knowledge of the multiplicity and profundity of the psyche. In our craving for self-knowledge, we lay bare the nerves and the blood-vessels of every thought and feeling, following them into their finest ramifications. Stendhal, Hebbel, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Amiel, the intrepid Hans Jaeger, have disclosed unsuspected realms of self-knowledge by their self-portraiture. Their successors, provided with more delicate implements of research, will be able to penetrate stratum by stratum, room by room, farther and yet farther into our new universe, into the depths of the human mind.

Let this be a consolation to those who have been led to fear that art will decay in a world rendered unduly conscious by the advance of psychological technique. Art does not cease; it merely takes new turns. A decline in mythopoeic faculty was inevitable. Fantasy is ever most vigorous in childhood, and only in the childhood of a nation is it prone to luxuriate in mythology and symbolism. In compensation for the loss of visionary power, we get a capacity for clear and well-substantiated knowledge. Such a trend is obvious in the contemporary novel, which is becoming the embodiment of an exact science of the mind, whereas of old it was content to draw boldly on imagination. Yet in this union of imagination with science, there is no suppression of art; there is merely a renewal of an ancient family tie. When science began, with Hesiod and Heraclitus, it was still poesy, orphic words and soaring hypotheses. Now, after a divorce which has lasted for thousands of years, the investigatory intelligence and the creative have joined hands once more; and poesy, instead of describing a realm of fable, describes the magic of our human life. The unknown wonders of the physical universe can no longer stimulate imagination, now that

the world has grown familiar from the tropics to the poles, now that its fauna and its flora are everyday objects of contemplation, even the creatures that dwell in the amethystine abysses of the sea. Everything on the terrestrial globe has been weighed and measured, named and docketed, leaving in the physical realm nothing but the stars as objects for flights of fancy. More and more, therefore, must the spirit, impelled by the undying urge for knowledge, look inward, to probe its own enigmas. The internum aeternum, the spiritual universe, still offers art an inexhaustible domain. Man, as his knowledge widens, as he grows more fully conscious, will devote himself ever more boldly to the solution of an insoluble problem, to the discovery of his own soul, to the pursuit of self-knowledge.

Salzburg, Easter, 1928.

Il me dit qu'il est un homme libre, citoyen du monde.
MURALT, WRITING OF CASANOVA IN A LETTER
TO ALBRECHT VON HALLER, JUNE 21, 1760

Casanova

1725–1798

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THE MAN AND THE BOOK

He tells himself the story of his life. This is his entire literary output—but what a story!

Casanova is an exceptional instance, a chance intruder in world literature, above all because this famous charlatan has as little right in the pantheon of creative geniuses as the name of Pontius Pilate has in the Creed. His rank as imaginative writer is as questionable as his invented title of nobility, Chevalier de Seingalt: the few verses he penned hastily betwixt bed and the gaming table in honour of one lady or another reek of musk and academic paste; one who would read his *Icosameron*, a monstrosity of a utopian romance, needs the patience of a lamb under the hide of a jackass; and when the excellent Giacomo begins to philosophize, it is hard to keep from yawning. In very truth, Casanova has as little claim to enter the company of great writers as he has to a place in the Almanach de Gotha; in both he is a parasite, an unwarrantable intruder. Nevertheless, this son of a shady actor, this unfrocked priest, this ununiformed soldier, this notorious cheat (a superintendent of police in Paris describes him in his dossier as a "fameux filou"), is able to ruffle it for a large part of his life among emperors and kings, and dies at last in the arms of a great nobleman, the Prince de Ligne: and, though he seems a mere pretender in the world of letters, one among many, ashes to be blown about by the winds of time, his roaming shade has

found a place for itself among the immortals. Here, too, is an even more remarkable fact. Whereas nearly all his noble fellow countrymen, the sublime poets of Arcady, the "divine" Metastasio, the distinguished Parini, and the rest of them, are to be found only on the upper shelves of the libraries, have become material for dry-as-dust studies—his name, uttered with an indulgent smile, is still on everyone's lips. According to all earthly probability, his erotic Iliad will still be very much alive, and will still find admiring readers, long after *La Gerusalemme liberata* and *Il pastor fido* have been gathering the dust of ages upon their unread tops. At one stride, the cunning adventurer has outdistanced all the great writers of Italy since Dante and Boccaccio.

Stranger yet, for such immense winnings, Casanova has staked nothing at all; he has overreached fate, and secured immortality by artifice. This gamester knows naught of the overwhelming sense of responsibility which burdens the true artist. Not for him the corvée of unsociability which severs the writer overburdened with work from the warm world of everyday life. Casanova knows naught of the dread pleasure with which the author plans a book, or of the eagerness for perfection which is his tragical associate and torments like an unquenchable thirst. No part of his experience is the mute but masterful and ever unsatisfied demand of fancied shapes to be endowed with earthly circumstantiality, the longing of ideas to be liberated from earth and to soar upwards into the ether. He knows nothing of sleepless nights, followed by days which must be spent in the dull and slavish labour of polishing words and phrases, until at length the meaning shines with all the colours of the rainbow through the lens of speech; nothing of the multifarious but un-

seen toil of the creative writer, unrewarded and often unrecognized for generations; nothing of the man of letters' heroical renunciation of the joys of life. Casanova, as everyone knows, took life easily enough, sacrificing not a morsel of his joys, not an hour of his sleep, not a moment of his pleasures, to the stern goddess of immortality. He never lifted a finger to secure fame; and yet to him, born under a fortunate star, fame has come superabundantly. As long as he had a gold piece or two in his pocket, a drop of oil with which to keep the flame of love alight, as long as he was still able to throw the dice, he had no thought of keeping company with the serious-minded spirit of art, or of soiling his fingers with ink. Only when all doors had been closed upon him, when women began to laugh at his amorous advances, when he was lonely, a beggar, and impotent, when the joys of life had become irrecoverable memories—only then, when he was a shabby and splenetic old man, did he turn to work as a substitute for livelier experiences. Only then, urged on by the lack of pleasure, by boredom, tormented by anger as a neglected cur is tormented by the mange, did he grumblingly set to work to tell the story of the septuagenarian Casaneus-Casanova, the story of his own life.

He tells the story of his own life. This is his entire literary output—but what a story! Five novels, twenty comedies, a sheaf of novelettes and episodes, and a superabundance of fascinating situations and anecdotes, trodden like grapes to form the must of an exuberant narrative: the result is a life history which assumes the aspect of a perfectly rounded work of art though it has not had the ordering touch of the master of literary art. Herein we find the most convincing solution of that which at first seems the inexplicable mystery of his fame. What makes

Casanova a genius is, not the way in which he tells the story of his life, but the way in which he has lived it. That life itself is this great artist's workshop, is at once his matter and his form. To this work of art, really and truly his own, he has given himself up with the creative ardour which imaginative writers in general devote to verse or to prose, glowing with the fiery resolve to stamp every moment, every still undecided possibility, with the highest dramatic expression. What another has to invent, he has actually experienced; what another must form in imagination, he has figured forth in his warm and voluptuous body: that is why, in this case, the pen and the fancy have no need to adorn the truth; enough that they should take a tracing of an existence which has already been effectively staged. No writer of his day, and scarcely a writer since unless it be Balzac, has invented so many variations and situations as Casanova experienced; and throughout a whole century no other man has ever lived a life swinging in such bold curves. Compare, as regards pure wealth of happenings (not as regards spiritual substance or depth of experience), the biographies of Goethe, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and other contemporaries, with Casanova's own. How much they seem, regarded in the light of that comparison, to run in grooves, how monotonous, how narrow, how provincial appear these lives—purposive though they are, and animated with creative will—beside the elemental career of the adventurer, who changes countries, towns, estates, occupations, worlds, and women, as easily as he changes his shirt; who is everywhere and instantly at home; who is always ready to welcome new surprises. These others are but dilettantes in matters of enjoyment, just as Casanova is a dilettante in the world of letters. That is the eternal tragedy of the man of the spirit, that

he, yearn though he may to fulfil his mission by experiencing all the voluptuousness of life, is nevertheless bound to his task, slave of his workshop, fettered by self-imposed duties, tied to order and to earth. Every true artist lives the larger half of his life alone, engaged in a duel with his creative work. Not in direct experience, but only through the mirror of fancy, may he enjoy the multiplicity of existence. To none but the uncreative, to none but the man of pleasure, to none but him who lives for life's own sake, is it permitted to give himself unreservedly and directly to reality. One who aims at a goal must renounce the delights of hazard. What the artist creates in imagination is, as a rule, what he is debarred from actually living.

On the other hand the counterparts of these artists, easy-going men of pleasure, usually lack the power of describing their manifold experiences. They lose themselves in the passing moment, so that when the moment has passed it is lost for ever, whereas the artist knows how to perpetuate the most trifling experience. Thus do the ends gape, instead of rounding the full circle; one lacks the wine, while the other lacks the goblet. Insoluble paradox: men of action and men of pleasure have more experience to report than any creative artist, but they cannot tell their story; the poietes, on the other hand, must fable, for they have seldom had experiences worth reporting. Imaginative writers rarely have a biography, and men who have biographies are only in exceptional instances able to write them.

Casanova is a splendid, almost unique exception. In him at length we find a man afire with the love of pleasure, a man who plucks at the fleeting hour, grasps at the skirts of happy chance, and is dowered by fate with the most extraordinary adventures; a man with an amazingly good

memory, and one whose character knows nothing of inhibitions. This man tells us the tremendous story of his life, tells it without any moral restraints, without poetical adornments, without philosophic embroidery; he gives us a plain, matter-of-fact account of his life as it actually was, passionate, hazardous, rascally, reckless, amusing, vulgar, unseemly, impudent, lascivious, but always tense and unexpected. He is moved to tell his story; not by literary ambition, not by boastfulness or penitence, or an exhibitionist urge toward confession; but by a straightforward desire to tell it. He tells it, therefore, simply and easily; as a veteran in a tavern, pipe in mouth, talks his best when he relates a few crisp and perhaps rather salacious adventures to unprejudiced auditors. Here the narrator is not a fabulist, an inventor, but the master of poesy, of life itself, life whose world is richer than any world of fancy. All that Casanova need do is satisfy the most modest of the demands made upon the artist; he must render the almost incredible, credible. To this task he is fully equal, despite the language of the memoirs, a somewhat awkward French.* Not even in a dream, however, did this tremu-

*I have no love either for footnotes or for controversy. I am impelled, however, to point out here that we still lack the original text of Casanova's memoirs, in default of which we have no right to pass a final judgment upon his capacity as a prose writer. The text we know is only a Bowdlerized version made by a French teacher of languages a century ago to the order of F. A. Brockhaus, the owner of the original manuscript. It is surely natural to expect that scientific students, at least, would at long last be allowed to see Casanova's actual text; and it need hardly be said that scholars of all lands, members of various academies, have urgently besought this favour. But against the Brockhauses, even the gods fight in vain. The owner of the manuscript, an obdurate autocrat, keeps the precious document locked up in the firm's safe, and, thanks to this arbitrary determination of an individual, one of the most interesting works in the

lous, gouty, and discontented old fellow, who passed the evening of his days in his sinecure occupation of librarian, ever think that in times to come these memoirs of his would be regarded by men of letters and historians as the most valuable record of eighteenth-century life. What would he have thought if Feltkirchner, the steward at Dux, had prophesied that a hundred and twenty years later there would be founded in Paris a Casanova Society, simply in order to scrutinize every fragment of the adventurer's handwriting, to check every date, and to discover if possible the names of the ladies represented in the book by blanks. Paris was forbidden ground; Feltkirchner, his housemate, was his enemy; and the good Giacomo, vain though he was, would have regarded such a prophecy as an ill-natured jest.

In truth we can congratulate ourselves that, despite his vanity, Casanova had no inkling that he was destined to become famous, and therefore was never inclined to pull out the moral, the pathetical, or the psychological stop—for only one who is free from purposes of this order can preserve the heedless and therefore elemental straightforwardness characteristic of the memoirs. The old gamester sits down to his writing table at Dux with his usual composure, and the writing of his book is his last win at the gaming table. But he never learns that he is a winner, for he departs this life before the cards are turned. Yet he has won immortality, nonetheless. Nothing will ever dislodge him from his place among the immortals, this sometime librarian at Dux, from his place beside his adversary Monsieur de Voltaire and other famous authors.

literature of the whole world can only be read and appraised in a grossly distorted form. Hitherto, the firm of Brockhaus has not even vouchsafed any adequate reason for this obstinate refusal.

We have not yet finished writing the story of his life, and its inexhaustible treasures are continually attracting fresh literary craftsmen to pen works of fancy about him. Unquestionably he has been a winner in the game of life, this "commediante in fortuna," this man who was ever ready to try his luck; and no protests of posterity will deprive him of his gains. Some may despise him for his immorality, others may convict him of errors of historical fact, and yet others may disavow him as an artist. But there is one thing that no objector can do—make an end of him! For since he lived his life and wrote his story, no romancer and no thinker has invented a more romantic tale than that of his life, or fabled a stranger personality than Casanova's.

LIKENESS OF CASANOVA IN YOUTH

Do you know that you are an exceedingly handsome man?

SAID BY FREDERICK THE GREAT TO CASANOVA, WALKING IN THE PARK AT SANS-SOUCI (1764)

In the theatre of a petty capital, the singer has just finished her aria with a fine coloratura passage; there has been a thunder of applause; but now, during the recitative, the attention of the audience has wandered. The fops are paying visits to the boxes; the ladies are eyeing people through their lorgnons, and are daintily eating jelly or sipping orange-tinted sherbet, paying scant attention to the antics of Harlequin and Columbine on the stage. Suddenly all eyes are turned inquisitively towards a stranger who, with the easy air of a man of distinction, makes a late entry into the auditorium. Of herculean figure, he is attired as a man of wealth. An upper garment of ash-tinted velvet falls in rich folds over an embroidered brocade waistcoat and costly lace; the darker lines of his vesture are relieved by the gleam of gold lace, which extends from the clasp at his neck on either side of his shirt-frill down to the top of his silk stockings. In his right hand, negligently held, is a white-plumed hat. An aroma of the latest fashionable scent radiates from the unknown, as he leans in an elegant posture against the balustrade, his left hand, gleaming with rings, resting on the jewelled hilt of his sword. As if unaware that he is the cynosure of all eyes,

he lifts his golden lorgnon, and with feigned indifference scans the boxes. There is a rustle of whispered inquiries. Who is it? A prince? A rich foreigner? The whisperers draw one another's attention to the diamond-spangled order which hangs from the scarlet ribbon that crosses his breast, the order he has disguised with so many brilliants that no one recognizes it for one of the papal spurred crosses which are as common as blackberries. The singers on the stage are quick to note the distraction of the audience, and their efforts are relaxed. The ballet dancers, peeping from the wings across the violins and the 'cellos, wonder whether this stranger is a person whose acquaintance is worth making.

Before anyone has been able to solve the riddle of the newcomer's identity, or to learn whence he has come, the ladies in the boxes have been quick to note how handsome he is, how fine a figure of a man. He is tall and broad-shouldered, his hands are strong and sinewy, his frame is tense as steel without a line of softness in it. He stands lightly poised, his head a little lowered, like that of a bull before the charge. Seen in profile, his face recalls those seen on Roman coins, so finely chiselled is it in every line. The forehead is splendidly arched beneath the chestnut hair; the nose is aquiline, the chin powerful, and beneath the chin is a big Adam's apple (which women regard as a sure sign of virility). His features, one and all, give unmistakable proof of dash, resolution, a conqueror's gifts. Only the lips are soft, being red and sensual, gently curved, while peeping from between them, like the flesh of a pomegranate, gleam the white teeth. As the handsome stranger scans the audience, though he does it in leisurely fashion, we note a certain impatience in the eyes that flash from beneath the arched bushy

brows. He has a hunter's glance, the expression of one surveying a quarry, of one who is ready to pounce upon his prey. As yet, however, he is not fully aflame, while his eyes roam along the boxes, and while, paying scant heed to the men, he samples (as a merchant samples wares) the women whose bare necks and shoulders are visible in the shadowy nests. He looks at them one after another, fastidiously, with the eye of a connoisseur, knowing that they are contemplating him in return. As he does so, his sensual lips part a little more widely, and a smile begins to form, a smile that almost reminds us of the snarl of a beast ready to bite. As yet this smile is not directed towards any one woman in particular; it is for them all, for women in general, the essential woman whose warm nudities are hidden under the clothes. Now, in one of the boxes, he recognizes an acquaintance. Instantly his gaze is arrested, his eyes, which a moment before were impudently questioning, show a velvety glitter; he draws his left hand away from his sword hilt, while in his right he grips his heavy plumed hat more firmly; and he moves to greet his lady friend, a word of recognition on his lips. Gracefully he bends to kiss her proffered fingers, and speak to her courteously. For her part, the lady is confused, his caressive tone disturbs her, but she manages to control herself and introduces the stranger to her companions saying: "Le Chevalier de Seingalt."

There are the usual polite amenities. The guest is invited to a place in the box. A conversation ensues. By degrees Casanova raises his voice a little, till it dominates the others. Like a trained actor, he articulates clearly, and tends more and more to speak to a wider audience than that of the box he has entered. He wants all those nearby to hear what excellent French and Italian he speaks,

and how cleverly he can quote Horace. As if by chance, he has let one of his hands fall upon the breastwork of the box in such a way as to display the lace ruffle on his sleeve, and to show the sparkle of the great solitaire on his finger. Then, taking from his pocket a diamond-studded snuffbox, he offers the gentlemen some Mexican snuff, saying: "My friend the Spanish ambassador sent it to me yesterday by special courier." When one of the gentlemen admires the miniature painted on the snuffbox, he says indifferently, but loud enough to be heard through the auditorium: "A present from my friend and gracious lord the Elector of Cologne." Though he seems to say these things quite casually, the braggart is all the while eyeing those to right and left of him with the questing gaze of a bird of prey, that he may judge the effect of his words.

He sees that he is the centre of all eyes; he feels that the women are eager to know more about him; and he grows bolder. With an adroit turn of the conversation, he is able to make it lap over into the adjoining box, where the prince's inamorata is listening well-pleased (he is sure of it) to his admirable Parisian French. Preening himself before this handsome woman, he utters a gallantry, which she smilingly answers. Now his acquaintance has no choice but to introduce the Chevalier to this exalted dame. He has gained his end. Next day at noon he will dine in distinguished company; to-morrow evening, in one of the palaces of the nobility, he will propose a little game of faro, and will plunder his host; to-morrow night he will sleep with one of these pretty women, whose nudity he has already relished in his mind. He will succeed in doing all these things thanks to his bold, self-confident, and energetic entry, his conqueror's will, and the virile beauty of his dark-skinned face. To these he owes every-

thing: the smiles of women, the solitaire on his finger, the diamond watchchain and the gold lace, credit at the bank, the friendship of men of title, and, best of all, freedom to roam at will through an infinitely varied life.

Meanwhile the prima donna has begun a new aria. Bowing profoundly, acknowledging urgent invitations from gentlemen charmed by his conversation, and graciously invited to her levee by the prince's inamorata, Casanova takes his leave and returns to his place. There he sits down, his left hand again poised on the hilt of his sword, while he leans forward to listen to the song. Behind him runs a whisper from box to box, a buzz of questions, which are all answered: "The Chevalier de Seingalt." Nothing more is known of him. No one can say whence he has come, or why, or whither he is going. But the name ripples through the eager hall, and at length makes its way across the footlights to the stage, where the singers have been no less curious as to his identity. On hearing it, a little Venetian dancer laughs contemptuously, and exclaims: "Chevalier de Seingalt? The swindler! He is Casanova, the son of La Buranella; he is the abate who seduced my sister five years ago; old Bragadin's court jester; the braggart, the rascal, the adventurer." Nevertheless, this cheerful young lady does not seem to take his misdeeds altogether unkindly, for she nods to him from the wings, and kisses her hand to him coquettishly. Catching sight of this, he remembers who she is, and is quite unperturbed. He is sure that she will not try to put a spoke in his wheel, will not interfere with his plucking of the distinguished geese. No doubt she will be ready enough to sleep with him to-night!

THE ADVENTURERS

Does she know that your whole fortune is the stupidity of your fellowmen?

CASANOVA TO CROCE, THE CARD-SHARPER

FROM the close of the Seven Years' War down to the outbreak of the French revolution, calm prevailed throughout Europe for a quarter of a century. The great dynasties of Habsburg, Bourbon, and Hohenzollern had fought till they were tired. The burghers sat at home smoking their pipes in comfort; the soldiers powdered their pigtails and polished the muskets for which they no longer had any use; the countries, so long tormented, could at length enjoy a quiet doze. But the rulers found life tedious without any wars. They were bored to death, all the German and Italian and other petty princes, in their diminutive capitals; and they looked round eagerly in search of amusement. Infinitely tedious did they find it, these little grandees, these electors and dukes, in their newly built and damp rococo palaces. It was dull for them there, despite all their pleasure gardens and fountains and orangeries, despite their dungeons and galleries and game-parks and treasure chambers.

With the aid of money extorted from their subjects, and with manners learned from Parisian dancing masters, they ape Trianon and Versailles, each one of them fancying himself cast for the part of le roi soleil. Ennui even

leads them to become patrons of the arts, to affect literary tastes, so that they correspond with Voltaire and Diderot; collect china, coins, old masters; have French comedies and Italian operas staged at their court theatres, showering their favours on foreign artists—for only one of them, the ruler in Weimar, has had the good sense to invite to his court a few Germans, Schiller, Goethe, and Herder by name. Their only other amusements are boar-hunts and water pageants. As always when people of the fashionable world find life tedious, theatricals and dancing assume peculiar importance. That is why these princes outbid one another, that is why they set diplomacy at work, in order to secure the most lively entertainers, the best dancers, instrumentalists, castrati, philosophers, alchemists, and organists. Gluck and Handel, Metastasio and Hasse, are lured from one court to another, turn by turn with cabalists and cocottes, firework artists and huntsmen, illuminators and ballet masters. Each one of these petty princes wants his palace to be distinguished by the presence of the newest, the most splendid, the most fashionable among the famous, being moved rather by the desire to outdo his brother prince at the court twenty miles away than by any reasonable motive. At one court after another they have secured efficient masters of ceremonies, have built fine theatres and opera houses, and have graced these with successful performances; only one thing more is needed to relieve the monotony of life, and to make the eternal round of social intercourse among fifty or sixty titled families assume the aspect of really distinguished society—notable visitors, interesting guests, cosmopolitan strangers, a few raisins for the dough of provincial boredom, a breath from the great world to clear the stuffy atmosphere of a capital containing no more than thirty streets.

They hear of a court, and in a trice they flock thither, the adventurers, in hundreds of masks and disguises. No one can tell you whence they come. They arrive in travelling carriages, or maybe in coaches of the best English pattern, to rent the finest front rooms in the most expensive inns. They wear brilliant uniforms, said to be those of some Indian or Mongolian army; and they bear pompous names, false as the jewels they flaunt on their shoe-buckles. They speak all languages; claim to be the familiar friends of rulers and other people of importance; have served in every army of note; and have studied at all the universities. Their pockets bulge with memoranda of schemes; their mouths are full of promises; they plan lotteries, new taxes, alliances, factories; they offer women and orders and castrati. Although they have not as much as half a dozen gold pieces in their purses, they whisper in every ear that they know the secret of the philosopher's stone. They devise a new trick for each court. In one they let it be given out that they are freemasons and Rosicrucians; in another, where the ruler has a lust for money, they claim to be extraordinarily well versed in the law of transmutation and in the writings of Theophrastus. To a prince whose chief interest is in the fair sex, they offer their services as pimps; to one who has warlike ambitions, they present themselves as spies; to a ruler with a taste for literature and the arts, they introduce themselves as philosophers and poetasters. They snare the superstitious with horoscopes; the credulous with schemes for enrichment; the gamblers with false cards; and the unsuspicious with a veneer of good breeding. But whatever the role they choose, they are careful to invest it with an aroma of mystery which will make it more interesting than ever. Like will o' the wisps, flaring of a sudden and lead-

ing the unwary into danger, they flourish in the stagnant and marshy air of the courts.

They are made welcome at the courts, where people are amused by them without respecting them. No one troubles to inquire the genuineness of their titles of nobility, any more than to ask for the marriage certificates of the ladies who pass as their wives, or for evidence of the virginity of the girls they may bring along. Whoever can give pleasure, and relieve even for an hour that boredom which is the most deadly of all the sicknesses of a court, is sure to be a welcome guest. They are tolerated, as a man tolerates a courtesan who amuses him and does not rob him too impudently. Sometimes an artist or a swindler will have to put up (as had Mozart) with a kick in the behind from a princely boot; sometimes they find their way from the ballroom to the prison, and even, like Afflisio, the manager of the imperial theatre, to the galleys. The cleverest among them feather their nests; become tax-collectors, souteneurs, or even, as complaisant husbands of court whores, genuine noblemen and barons. But for the most part they find it wiser not to wait until the roast burns, for their whole charm lies in their novelty and their incognito. If they turn up the corners of the cards too obviously, if they dip their hands too deep into people's pockets, if they make themselves at home too long in any one court, it may well happen that someone will tear the cloak from their shoulders and disclose the mark of the branding iron or the scar left by the lash. Frequent change of air is necessary to save them from the hangman's noose. That is why they are continually on the move across Europe, commercial travellers of a peculiar kind, gypsies who pitch their moving tents in palace after palace. Thus it is that throughout the eighteenth century a rotation of

the same figures proceeds from Madrid to St. Petersburg, from Amsterdam to Pozsony, from Paris to Naples. At first one is inclined to think it is no more than a lucky chance that, at every gaming table and at all the petty courts one after another, Casanova should encounter the same rogues, Talvis, Afflisio, Schwerin, and Saint-Germain; but the adept knows that such perpetual wanderings denote flight rather than a round of amusements.

There is a genuine freemasonry among these rogues. When they meet as old acquaintances, one of them will hold the ladder for another, and one of them will vouch for another. They exchange wives, coats, names; and there is only one thing which each of them keeps for himself—his own special profession. Parasites of the courts, these actors, dancers, musicians, adventurers, harlots, and alchemists, form, in conjunction with the Jesuits and the Jews, the only International that as yet exists in the world of the eighteenth century; the nobility is sessile, fixed to this court or to that; and the bourgeoisie is dull, immobile, not yet emancipated. But the rabble rout of freebooters, without flag and without fatherland, moves on freely from one country to another and rubs shoulders with all classes. With their appearance, a new age dawns, and a new method of exploitation. They are not like the footpads of old, who plundered the defenceless, not like the highwaymen who, pistol in hand, robbed the travellers in coaches; their art is a subtler one. For them, a ready wit has replaced the cudgel, and a calculated impudence proves more effective than the bravado of the old-style robber. Their success is the outcome of a knowledge of psychology. These new cutpurses have sworn alliance with cosmopolitanism and good manners. They rob their victims with the aid of marked cards and forged bills of exchange.

They are of the same race as the bold fellows who sailed to the Indies in the earlier days, who ruffled it as free companions, who would never be content to earn their livelihood in a humdrum civic fashion, but preferred to take big risks on the chance of filling their pockets at one blow. Now the method has changed, and therewith its physiognomy. The new adventurers have not the rough hands, the sodden faces, the coarse manners of those earlier captains; they have rings on their delicately kept fingers, and their heads are adorned with powdered wigs. They use a modish lorgnon, they walk like dancing masters, articulate like actors, mouth wise sayings like philosophers. With imperturbable visage, they cheat at cards; and with a patter of witty conversation, they persuade women to pay them a long price for love philtres and spurious jewels.

Beyond question, there is something attractive about them one and all; their wit and their psychological insight make them interesting; and some of them deserve to be named geniuses. The second half of the eighteenth century was their heroic period, their golden age. Just as earlier, under Louis XV, the French poets formed a brilliant pleiad, and just as later in Germany a brilliant group of creative writers made the name of Weimar ever memorable, so do the figures of these magnificent swindlers and immortal adventurers brilliantly characterize this particular period of European history. Ere long they are not content with dipping their hands into princely pockets; their ambition is to spin the roulette board of universal history. Instead of serving, they wish to make others serve them, with the result that the activity of adventurers has set its stamp upon the eighteenth century. John Law, an Irish wanderer, convulses the French currency with his

assignats. D'Eon, passing for a man, but one whose sex is as dubious as his reputation, guides international policy. A little round-headed fellow, Baron Neuhof by name, becomes king of Corsica for a time, is later an inmate of debtors' prisons in various capitals, and dies in London as a pensioner in a debtors' prison. Cagliostro, a Sicilian peasant lad, who has never learned to read and write properly, has Paris at his feet, and fashions out of the famous necklace a halter which puts an end to monarchy. Trenck (the most tragical figure of them all, seeing that though an adventurer he was not devoid of true nobility) sports a red cap, plays the hero of freedom—and perishes on the guillotine. Saint-Germain has the king of France at his beck and call, and yet we are still puzzled concerning the mystery of his birth. One and all, these adventurers have more power than men born to power; they stimulate the fancy and arouse the attention of the whole world; they humbug the learned, lead women astray, plunder the rich, pull the strings of the political marionettes. Last and not worst among them comes our Giacomo Casanova, the historiographer of the guild, who describes them all when he describes himself, rounding off the story of these never-to-be-forgotten men with a hundred deeds and adventures of his own. Every one of them is more famous than the authors, more influential than the statesmen of their day; for a brief time they are the masters of a world already doomed to perish.

For the heroic age of the adventurers lasted no more than thirty or forty years! Then the stage on which they played was destroyed by the most finished of their type, by the most brilliant genius of them all, by the arch-adventurer, Napoleon. The characteristic of genius is that it does in real earnest that which talent does only as play-

acting; that it is not content with make-believe, but demands the whole world as a stage for creative activities. When Bonaparte, the impoverished little Corsican, calls himself Napoleon, this is not that he may, like Casanova-Seingalt, or like Balsamo-Cagliostro, hide his bourgeois origin behind a mask of nobility; he is putting forward a masterful claim to superiority, is seizing triumph as his right, instead of endeavouring to snatch it by craft. With Napoleon, adventurer of genius among a crowd of adventurers who had merely talent, the adventurer comes out of the ante-room of princes to seat himself on the imperial throne; and sets for a brief hour the most splendid of all crowns, the crown of Europe, upon his head.

TRAINING AND TALENTS

He is said to be a man of letters, but to have an intelligence rich in cabals; it is reported that he has been in England and in France, has gained inexcusable advantages at the cost of knights and ladies, for it has ever been his way to live at others' expense, and to get the better of the credulous. If we examine the aforesaid Casanova, we see in him unbelief, fraud, unchastity, and voluptuousness, assembled in an alarming way.

SECRET REPORT OF THE VENETIAN INQUISITION, 1775

Casanova never denies having been an adventurer. On the contrary, he is proud of having been the flat-catcher rather than the flat, the shearer rather than the shorn, in a world where, as the old adage says, people want to be fooled. One thing, however, he strongly objects to. You must not confound him with commonplace knaves, jailbirds and brethren of the halter, who pick pockets in a rough and commonplace fashion, instead of elegantly charming money out of the hands of the stupid. In the memoirs, he is always careful to shake the dust from his cloak when he has had to acknowledge meeting (and, in truth, making common cause) with the cardsharpers Afflisio or Talvis—for although, as rogues, they have to meet on the same plane, they come from different worlds. He, Casanova, is from an upper world, a cultured

world; they come from below, from nowhere. Casanova thus resembles the sometime student, Schiller's sententious robber-captain, Karl Moor, who despises his confederates Spiegelberg and Schufterle because they have a positive liking for their rough and bloody trade, to which he has taken from a misguided enthusiasm, in order to revenge himself for the baseness of the world. In the same way Casanova always energetically dissociates himself from the mob of common rogues, in whose figures the splendid, the distinguished profession of adventurer forfeits its splendour and its distinction. Nay, verily, our friend Giacomo would have us regard as noble that which the ordinary cit looks on as dishonourable, and the stickler for propriety as revolting. He finds a philosophical justification for the adventurer's career. Far from being an unsavoury business, it is, for him, a fine art. According to him, for the philosopher here below there is no other moral duty than to amuse himself to the top of his bent at the cost of the blockheads, to dupe the vain, cheat the simple, relieve misers of their superfluous wealth, make cuckolds of the husbands—in a word, play the part of envoy of divine justice and punish all the follies of this world. Thus, for him, fraud is not merely a fine art, but a supreme moral duty; and, as a worthy outlaw, he practises it with an excellent conscience and incomparable self-satisfaction.

If we are to believe Casanova, he did not become an adventurer simply because he was short of money and had inherited a slothful disposition, but from temperament, fired by genius. Having had a talent for acting handed down to him by his father and his mother, he made the whole world into his stage, of which Europe was the centre. For him, as for Til Eulenspiegel of old, to hum-

bug his fellows, to make fools of them, came by nature, and he could not live except in a carnival atmosphere of dominoes and jesting. Again and again, a hundred times over, he had a chance of entering some respectable occupation, of settling down in a warm and well lined nest; no temptation of this kind could induce him to make himself at home in a respectable occupation. If you were to offer him millions, high office and a dignified position, he would not accept them; he wished always to remain in his own element. He had good reason, therefore, for the pride with which he distinguishes himself from other adventurers. He is urged on to his madcap exploits, not by desperation, but by sheer delight in what he is doing. Furthermore, it is true enough that he did not originate like Cagliostro from a foul country hovel, or like Count Saint-Germain from utterly unknown beginnings which we may assume to have been equally malodorous. Messer Casanova was certainly born in lawful wedlock, and from a family in tolerably good repute. His mother, nicknamed "La Buranella," was a famous cantatrice, who was acclaimed in all the opera-houses of Europe, and ultimately secured a permanent appointment at the court theatre in Dresden. His brother Giambattista's name is mentioned in every history of art as a noted pupil of Raphael Mengs, who was still regarded as a great artist at the close of the eighteenth century. This youngest Casanova's battle canvases can be seen in the leading galleries. The second son, Francisco, was likewise a painter of considerable renown. Giacomo's other relatives pursued dignified avocations, that of lawyer, priest, and the like.

We see, then, that our Casanova did not come from the gutter, but sprang from the same artistic and variegated stratum of the burgher class as Mozart and Beethoven.

Like them, he had had the advantage of an excellent general education. Having the gift of tongues he was able, amid all the scrapes of his youth and despite his premature amorous escapades, to learn Latin, Greek, French, and Hebrew, with a little Spanish and English thrown in—although for thirty years the German language remained outside his ken. He excelled in mathematics no less than in philosophy. He was a competent theologian, preaching his first sermon in a Venetian church when he was not yet sixteen years old. As a violinist, he earned his daily bread for a whole year in the San Samuele theatre. When he was eighteen, so runs the tale, he became doctor of laws in the University of Padua—though down to the present day the Casanovists are still disputing whether the degree was genuine or spurious. This much is certain, that he must have had many advantages of a university education, for he was well informed in chemistry, medicine, history, philosophy, literature, and, above all, in the more lucrative (because more perplexing) sciences of astrology and alchemy. In addition, the handsome, nimble young fellow early became skilled in all the less intellectual arts that were then proper to a gentleman, such as dancing, fencing, riding, and card playing. If we add to these acquirements that he had an amazingly good memory, so that in all his life he never forgot a face, and never failed in the ability to recall anything he had heard, read, uttered, or seen, we have the picture of a man with quite exceptional endowments: almost a savant, almost a poet, almost a philosopher, almost a gentleman.

But this "almost" was for Casanova the heel of Achilles. He was almost everything: a poet and yet not wholly one, a thief and yet not a professional one. He strove hard to qualify for the highest intellectual rank,

and strove hard to qualify for the galleys; yet he never succeeded in attaining perfection. As universal dilettante, indeed, he was perfect, knowing an incredible amount of all the arts and all the sciences; but he lacked one thing, and this lack made it impossible for him to become truly productive. He lacked will, resolution, patience. Let him study the books of some specialty for a year, and you will find no better jurist, no more brilliant historian. He might become a professor of any science, so quickly and accurately does his brain work. But he has no taste for thoroughness. A confirmed gamester, he finds serious application impossible; intoxicated with the wine of life, he revolts against commonplace perseverance. He never wants to be anything, for he is content to seem to be everything. The semblance suffices him, since it deceives his fellows, to cheat whom is an inexhaustible delight. Experience has taught him that a little learning is enough. In any domain, no matter what, where he has the first elements of knowledge, a splendid assistant springs to his aid—his stupendous impudence, his unchallengeable self-confidence, his swell mobsman's courage. Whatever Casanova undertakes, he never admits that he is a novice in the enterprise. He promptly assumes the manners of an expert, plays the swindler or cardsharper to perfection, and can almost always extract himself from a tangle. In Paris, Cardinal de Bernis asks him whether he knows anything about lotteries. He is as ignorant of them as a babe unborn, but it need hardly be said that he answers glibly in the affirmative, appears before a committee, and, with his unrivalled gift of the gab, unrolls financial schemes as if he had been a bank manager for the last twenty years. He is in Valencia when the text of an Italian opera is missing. Casanova sits down and writes one offhand. Beyond a doubt if he had

been asked to write the music as well as the libretto, he would have sharked up something out of the old operas. In Russia, he presents himself to Catherine the Great as a reformer of the calendar and a learned astronomer. In Courland, a no less ready-made expert, he inspects the mines. Playing the chemist, he recommends to the republic of Venice a new method of dyeing silk. In Spain, he poses as a land reformer and a colonizer. He drafts for Emperor Joseph II an elaborate scheme to prevent usury. He writes comedies for the duke of Waldstein; constructs the tree of Diana and similar specimens of alchemist hocus-pocus for the Marchioness of Urfé; and he opens Madame de Rumain's treasure chest with the key of Solomon. He buys shares for the French government. In Augsburg, he presents himself as Portuguese ambassador; in France, he is by turns a manufacturer and the pimp who keeps the royal "deer park" supplied; in Bologna, he writes a pamphlet on medicine; in Trieste, he pens a history of Poland and translates the *Iliad* into ottava rima. He has the talent for doing anything in the world without making himself look ridiculous. If we glance through the list of his posthumous writings, we fancy that they must be those of a universal philosopher, of an encyclopædist, of a new Leibnitz. Here is a long novel, side by side with the opera *Odysseus and Circe,* an attempt at doubling the cube, a political dialogue with Robespierre. If you had asked him to give a proof of the existence of God or to write a hymn in praise of chastity, he would not have hesitated for a moment.

Beyond question he was a man of splendid and most varied gifts! Conscientiously applied in any direction, whether to science, art, diplomacy, or business, they would have sufficed to achieve wonders. Casanova delib-

erately frittered away his talents upon the purposes of the fleeting moment; and he, who might have been anything, preferred to be nothing—but free. "The idea of settling down was always repulsive to me, and a reasonable course of life never came natural to me." He cannot endure the prospect of a fixed occupation, whether it be that of well-paid manager of lotteries to His Most Christian Majesty, or that of a manufacturer, or that of a fiddler, or that of author. Hardly has he seated himself anywhere, when he gets bored by the daily routine, trips forth from his cosy nook into the street, and hastens to stake his all upon some new hazard. His true profession, he is convinced, is to have no profession; to give all the arts and sciences a trial by turns, and to change roles night after night like an actor in a repertory theatre. Besides, why should he moor himself anywhere? He does not want to have and to hold. A man of impetuous passions, he wants, not one life but a hundred. Since he is a devotee of freedom, since he only wishes to be assured of income and amusement and the joys of love for the hour that has just begun, since he never demands permanent security, he can laughingly dispense with home and possessions, which are nothing more than ties. Had they been written then, he would have approvingly quoted the lines of Grillparzer:

> The thing thou holdest, has thee in its grip;
> And where thou rulest, art in truth a slave.

Casanova would never be the slave of anything or anyone except chance, which does indeed handle him rudely at times, but is surprisingly good to him as a rule. True to this mistress, he contemptuously rejects anything that could chain him fast, and is a free thinker in the most lit-

eral sense of the term. "My greatest treasure," he says proudly, "is that I am my own master, and have no dread of misfortune." A manly device, which ennobles him more than does his borrowed title of "Chevalier de Seingalt." He pays no heed to what others may think of him, but leaps with charming recklessness over the moral hurdles with which they would fence him in, indifferent to the anger of those whom he leaves behind and to the wrath of those whose hedges he breaks down. As he speeds onward, he gets flying views of those who are engaged in fixed occupations; they seem to him ridiculous and contemptible. Nor is he impressed by the warlords, rattling their sabres, and yet yielding to the clamour of their generals. The learned are bookworms. The financiers sit anxiously watching their money-bags, and cannot sleep o' nights for fear lest their strongboxes should be rifled. No woman can hold him long in her arms; no ruler can persuade him to stay within the boundaries of any one country; no occupation can bind him for more than a brief space. In these matters, too, he breaks boldly out of the Leads, for he will rather risk his life than let it turn sour. All his talents, all his abilities, all his powers, all his courage, and all his genius, he will stake day after day on the table of fortune, his goddess. That is why his existence remains as mutable as running water, now appearing as a fountain sparkling in the sunshine, now as a cascade thundering down into a dark abyss. From a prince's table into prison, from the easy life of a spendthrift with money in his purse to that of a man who can only get food by pawning his coat, from seducer to souteneur, he moves with lightning speed; and through it all his spirits are mercurial, he is wanton in days of good fortune and equable in days of evil, always full of courage and confidence.

Courage, that is the keynote of Casanova's art of life; that is his gift of gifts. He does not try to ensure against disaster, but fearlessly risks his life. Among the thousands whose motto is "safety first," here is one who hazards all, and takes every chance. Well, we know that Dame Fortune smiles on the bold. She gives freehandedly to the idle and to the impudent where she is a niggard to the diligent; she prefers the impatient to the patient; and thus, upon this one man who is so immoderate in his demands, she showers more gifts than upon a whole generation of his contemporaries. She lifts him up and casts him down again, hurries him from land to land, gives him plenty of exercise. She sates him with women and fools him at the gaming table; she titillates him with passions, and cheats him with fulfilments. But she never forgets him, and never allows him to suffer from tedium. Herself indefatigable, she is a fit partner for this indefatigable man, perpetually finding him new opportunities and new ventures. Thus does his life become diversified, fantastical, kaleidoscopic, as hardly another in many centuries. Thus it is that he, who tells the story of his own life, he who never either was or wanted to be anything real, became an incomparable fabulist of existence—not, indeed, by his own will, but by that of life itself.

PHILOSOPHY OF SUPERFICIALITY

I have lived as a philosopher.
CASANOVA'S LAST WORDS

When life flows in so broad a stream, this always implies a certain lack of spiritual depth. One who can dance on all waters with as much agility as Casanova, must needs be as light as a cork. Thus the essential characteristic of his greatly admired art of life is seen, when we look at it closely, to consist, not so much in a positive virtue or power, as in a negative—in his complete freedom from any kind of moral inhibition. If we take this morsel of humankind, through whom the warm blood of passion streams so ardently, and examine his psychological make-up, the first thing that strikes us is the utter lack of ethical organs. His heart, his lungs, his liver, his brain, his muscles, and especially his seminal vesicles—these, one and all, are vigorous and healthy. But when we turn to study the spiritual sphere, where moral peculiarities and convictions are aggregated to form the mysterious tissue of character, we encounter absolute vacancy. There is nothing of this sort to be seen. With our acids and other solvents, with our scalpels and our microscopes, we shall still fail to detect in this otherwise sound organism even a trace of what is called conscience, of that spiritual super-ego which controls the impulses and senses. In so much firm, pleasure-loving flesh, we cannot find the merest trace of a moral nervous system. That explains the whole enigma of Casanova's subtle genius. Lucky man that he is,

he has only sensuality, and lacks the first beginnings of a soul. Bound by no ties, having no fixed aim, restrained by no prudential considerations, he can move at a different tempo from his fellow mortals, who are burdened with moral scruples, who aim at an ethical goal, who are tied by notions of social responsibility. That is the secret of his unique impetus, of his incomparable energy.

He voyages round the world, and never wishes to set his foot on firm ground. He is independent of laws, a free-booter, a filibuster, urged onward by his uncontrolled passions. Like other outlaws, he ignores the conventions of society, disregards social regulations, has no respect for the unwritten laws of European morality. What other men regard as sacred or important, is to him not worth a doit. If you try to explain to him the nature of a moral or conventional obligation, he will understand you just as little as a quashee nigger can understand metaphysics. Do you talk to him about love of country? He is a cosmopolitan who, during the seventy-three years of his life, has never had a sleeping-place of his own, and has lived at the sport of chance; he laughs at patriotism. Ubi bene, ibi patria; where he can best fill his pockets, and can most easily make his way into the bed of any woman for whom he takes a fancy; where he can most easily lead fools by the nose and enjoy all the comforts of life—there he stretches his legs out underneath the table and feels himself at home. Do you ask him to respect religion? He will profess any religion you like to name, will have himself circumcised or wear a Chinese pigtail, if the one or the other brings him the most trifling advantage; and all the time he will scoff at the new creed as heartily as he scoffs at the Roman Catholicism in which he was brought up. What does he need with a religion, he who believes only in the

warm joys of this world? "Probably there is no life after death; but if there be, we shall find out in due course." Thus does he argue, nonchalantly, uninterestedly, disregarding subtleties. Carpe diem, make the most of the fleeting hour, suck it dry like a grape and fling away the skin; that is his maxim. Cling to the world of senses, to the visible, the tangible, pressing all the juice of pleasure you can out of each instant as it passes. There you have the whole of his philosophy, and it is one which enables him to throw aside with a contemptuous laugh all the bourgeois moral precepts based upon honour, respectability, duty, shame, and loyalty, which would hinder a man from giving free rein to his impulses.

Honour? What can honour mean to Casanova? He esteems it no more than did fat Falstaff, who said, truly enough, that honour cannot set an arm or a leg, or take away the grief of a wound. Casanova is like the worthy English member of parliament, who once remarked in the House that he was continually hearing of our obligations to posterity, but would very much like to know what posterity has done for us. Honour cannot be enjoyed, cannot be grasped; it serves only to interfere with the enjoyment by interposing duties and obligations. That is enough to show that regard for honour is superfluous, seeing that duty and obligation are to Casanova the most detestable things in the world. The only duty he knows is the duty of feeding his high-strung body full of pleasure, and of sharing that elixir of pleasure with the greatest possible number of women. He never troubles to ask, therefore, whether his own warm fragrant existence has for others a good or a bad, a sweet or a sour taste; whether they regard his conduct as honourable or dishonourable, as worthy or shameful.

Shame? What an extraordinary word, what an incomprehensible idea! There is no such word in his dictionary. With the frank indifference of a lazzarone, in the full gaze of the public, he cheerfully takes down his breeches, and, with a broad grin, displays his genital organs, cheerfully discloses what another would keep to himself even on the rack, boasts of his rogueries, makes a parade of his very failures, his blunders, his attacks of venereal disorder; and he does all this, not with the mien of one who feels impelled to trumpet the crude truth, as does Jean-Jacques Rousseau, fully aware that his hearers will be amazed and horrified. Casanova is frank and unconcerned because he is not equipped with the nerves that would have enabled him to recognize moral distinctions, because he has no sense-organ adapted to make him aware of moral considerations. If you were to reproach him for having cheated at cards, he would merely answer, astonished at your chiding: "Oh, yes, I did cheat; I was in want of money!" Should you berate him for seducing a woman, he would answer with a laugh: "I gave her a jolly good time!" He would never dream of offering any excuse for having charmed money out of the pockets of the credulous. On the contrary, in his memoirs he approves these misdeeds of his by cynically remarking: "Reason takes its revenge when one cheats a blockhead." He does not defend himself. He never repents. Instead of wearing sackcloth and ashes, instead of lamenting over a misspent life which is ending in abject poverty and dependence, the toothless old rogue writes with delicious impudence: "I should regard myself blameworthy if I were rich to-day. But I have nothing left, I have squandered all my possessions, and that is a great consolation to me."

He has laid up no treasure in heaven, has not refrained

from indulging any of his passions out of regard for the dictates of morality or the welfare of his fellows; he has hoarded nothing, either for his own sake or for others'; and from his seventy years nothing is left to him save memories. Even these memories he would not hoard, but, to our good fortune, has squandered them on us. Surely, therefore, we should be the last to complain of his spendthrift ways!

To put Casanova's philosophy in a nutshell, it begins and ends with the admonition: "Live for this world, unconcernedly and spontaneously; do not allow yourself to be cheated by regard for another world (which may indeed exist, but whose existence is extremely doubtful), or by regard for posterity. Do not let finespun theories divert your attention from things close at hand; do not direct your endeavours towards a distant goal; follow the promptings of the moment. Foresight will cripple your activities here and now. Do not trouble your head with prudential considerations. Some strange deity has set us down in our seat at this gaming table of a world. If we wish to amuse ourselves there, we must accept the rules of the game, taking them as they are, without troubling to inquire whether they are good rules or bad."

In actual fact, never for a moment did Casanova waste his time in pondering the problem whether this world could have been or ought to have been different. "Love mankind, but love it as it is," he says in conversation with Voltaire. Do not try to play providence; leave that sort of thing to the creator of the world, who is responsible for it. Do not try to knead the old dough, for you will only soil your hands; it is much simpler, and far more agreeable, to pick out the raisins, daintily. One who thinks too much about others, forgets himself; one who devotes too much

attention to watching the course of the world, paralyses his own limbs. It seems to Casanova quite in order that stupid folk should have a bad time. As for the clever ones, God does not help them, and it is their own business to help themselves. Since we have to live in a crossgrained world, where some wear silk stockings and drive in carriages, while others, with empty bellies, must go afoot and in rags, then, for a reasonably clever fellow, the obvious thing is to make sure that he will be one of the carriage-folk—seeing that a man lives for himself, and not for others. No doubt that sounds extremely selfish; and yet, how can a philosophy of enjoyment be anything but selfish, how can one be an epicurean unless one is indifferent to the welfare of society? He who has a passionate desire to live for his own sake is perfectly logical when he callously disregards the fate of others.

Indifferent to others, indifferent to the great problems which each new day brings to mankind, Casanova lives his three and seventy years in impudent self-satisfaction. If, with his keen eyes, he looks eagerly to right and to left, this is only because he is in search of amusement, and does not want to miss any chances. But he will never wax indignant, will never follow Job's example of propounding unseemly questions to God Almighty. With an amazing economy of feeling, he takes everything as it comes, without troubling to label it as good or evil. When O'Morphi, a little Flemish drab of Irish extraction, fifteen years old, a girl who sleeps on straw and is ready to sell her virginity for a ducat, becomes a fortnight later one of the mistresses of His Most Christian Majesty, has a palace in the Parc aux Cerfs, is loaded with jewels, and in due course marries a complaisant nobleman; or when he himself, who was yesterday a poor fiddler in a Venetian

suburb, suddenly finds himself adopted son of a patrician, has money in his pocket and diamonds on his fingers —these things seem to him curious incidents, worth recording, but nothing to make a fuss about. That is the way of the world, unjust and incalculable. Since it will always be like this, always unjust, always incalculable, why rack your brains trying to discover a law of gravitation? Life is a switchback, and such fantastic ups and downs are its commonplaces. Only fools and the avaricious try to play roulette on a system, thus depriving themselves of the true enjoyment of the game. The real gambler, in life as well as at the gaming table, finds the greatest of all charms in the incalculability of events. Use tooth and claw to secure the best for yourself, "voilà toute la sagesse." Be a philosopher for your own good, not for the good of humanity. As interpreted by Casanova, this means that you are to be strong, covetous, ruthless, as you clutch the flying moments and make the most of them. For this convinced pagan, nothing but the actual moment counts. The next moment is uncertain. Never does he allow his pleasures to be interfered with by thinking of next time, for this present times makes up his whole world, the here and now which he can grasp with all his organs. "Life, be it happy or unhappy, fortunate or unfortunate, is the only good man possesses, and he who does not love life is unworthy of life." Only that which breathes, only that which meets pleasure with pleasure, only that which (skin to skin) caressively responds to his hot caresses—this and only this seems, to our confirmed anti-metaphysician, truly real and interesting.

Thus Casanova's interest in the world is confined to the organic, to the human. Never in his life, as far as we can judge, did he contemplate the starry heavens. The beauties

of nature left him cold. Flutter the pages of the sixteen volumes of his memoirs. You see a man with keen senses travelling through the most beautiful landscapes of Europe, from Posilipo to Tòledo, from the Lake of Geneva to the Russian steppes; but you will never find any reference to the beauties of natural scenery. A dirty little wench in a soldiers' drinking booth seems to him more important than all the works of Michelangelo; and he finds a game of cards in a stuffy tavern more beautiful than a sunset at Sorrento. Scenery and architecture are sealed books to Casanova, since he lacks the organ which brings us into touch with the cosmos, since he has no soul. Fields and meadows glowing red at sunrise, dew-sprinkled, with the long shadows of the trees lying athwart them; for him they are but green surfaces, on which the peasants, stupid as their own cattle, toil and sweat that their lords may have gold in pouch. Bosquets and dark alleys, they are some use certainly, for there a man can get out of sight with a woman when he wishes to enjoy himself. As for flowers, they are useful presents when you want to catch a woman's fancy. But, having eyes only for human beings, he is colour-blind to the aimless, the purposeless beauties of nature. For him, the world consists exclusively of towns with their galleries and their promenades, where the carriages drive up and down in the evening; the haunts of lovely women, places beset with coffee-houses in which one can play faro and win money from the other guests; places where there are opera-houses and brothels, and where it is easy to find a bedfellow for the night; places where there are good inns in which the cooks poetize with sauces and ragouts, and make music with white wine and red. Only the towns are the world for this man of pleasure, since in them alone can chance provide its mani-

fold surprises, since there alone has the incalculable room to work out its infinitely numerous and entrancing variations.

Casanova loves towns for the sake of their thronging population. In the towns are women as he enjoys them, in the plurality which saves him from the risk of monotony. Among towns, he likes best of all court towns, towns where luxury is rife, for there the voluptuous is sublimated into the artistic. Casanova, sensual though he be, is not a crude sensualist. An aria, beautifully sung, can charm him; a poem can captivate him; agreeable conversation warms his wine for him. To converse with clever men about books, or to listen to music while, in a box at the opera, he sits closely pressed against a fascinating woman; these intensify his joy in life. But we must not make any mistake here. Casanova's love for art is merely sportive, and never gets beyond the pleasure of a dilettante. For him, the spirit must serve life, since he will never live in order to serve the spirit. For him, therefore, art is nothing more than the finest and most subtle of aphrodisiacs; a means for stimulating the senses, for heightening enjoyment. It is a prelude to passion, a prelude that will enhance the subsequent joys of the flesh.

He will write a little poem, and will hand it, with a garter, to a lady whom he covets; he will recite some verses of Ariosto, to inflame her passion; with gentlemen, he will converse wittily about Voltaire and Montesquieu, that he may put himself on a good footing with them intellectually, and mask his designs on their purses. But this sensualist, a lazy southerner, never troubles himself about art or science when these demand pains and thoroughness, when they have to be pursued as ends in themselves and as disciplines having a worldwide signifi-

cance. One who has no thought beyond amusement, he shuns depths because he is content with the surface of things, with the frothy and perfumed upper levels of existence, with chance flirtations. He is always enjoying himself as a dilettante, and that is why he is so light on the wing, can flit so easily from blossom to blossom. Just as Dürer's Fortuna speeds barefoot over the spinning earth, borne up by her pinions, wafted onward by any wind that blows, settling nowhere, faithful to none, so does Casanova skim over the surface of life, forming no ties, but changing ever. Change is for him "the salt of pleasure," and pleasure is the only meaning of the world.

Buoyant on the wing as a mayfly, empty as a soap-bubble, sparkling in the light of passing events, he flutters on his way. Can we say that he has a character at all, seeing that it varies from hour to hour, and has no substance we can grasp? What is Casanova at bottom? Is he good or evil? Is he an honest man or a knave, a hero or a scamp? He is one or the other as the hour may dictate. Chameleon-like he takes his colour from circumstances, changing as the background varies. When he is in funds, you will not find anywhere a more distinguished gentleman. With charming profusion, with a radiant grandeur, amiable as some great prelate and merry as a page, he scatters his money with both hands. "I was never one to trouble about thrift." Like a high-born patron, he invites casual strangers to dinner, presents them with jewelled snuffboxes and rouleaux of ducats, does everything he can to delight them. But if you meet Casanova when his pockets are empty, and when unpaid bills are accumulating, I would advise you to avoid playing cards with this galantuomo. He will be in the mood to cheat you at every turn, will get you to change forged notes for him, will trade off his

mistress, will play you the most scurvy tricks. As undependable as a throw of the dice, he will to-day be the best and most entertaining companion in the world, and to-morrow a villainous footpad; on Monday he will pay court to a woman with all the delicacy of an Abelard, and on Tuesday he will play the pimp and sell her favours to anyone willing to give him a ten-pound note.

You cannot say that Casanova has either a good character or a bad one; he has no character at all. Character and spiritual substance are not among his attributes, any more than fins are proper to a mammal. His actions are neither moral nor immoral; they are simply amoral. Whatever he does is the reflex outcome of his physical make-up, and is quite uninfluenced by reason, logic, or ethical considerations. Let him catch sight of a woman, and all his pulses are beating; blindly he moves towards her under the urge of his temperament. When he comes across a gaming table, his hand is instantly in his pocket, and before he knows it he has staked his money. Do something that annoys him, and his fury has no bounds, his eyes flash, his cheeks flame, he clenches his fist and strikes out madly, charges "come un bue," as his fellow countryman and brother adventurer Benvenuto Cellini says. It is absurd, therefore, to hold Casanova accountable for what he does. It is not he who acts, but the hot blood within him, and there is no "he" to cope with its elemental impulses. "I never have been and never shall be able to master myself." He does not reflect and he never looks forward. When he is in a tight place, some brilliant flash of insight will often get him out of the difficulty, but he never calculates, never tries to plan before difficulties come. He is too impatient for that. Read the memoirs, and you will see that all his decisive actions, ranging from absurd prac-

tical jokes to the most outrageous rascalities, were the outcome of explosions of caprice, and were never dictated by intelligent calculation. Impulsively, one day, he casts aside the abate's frock; on another occasion, when he is a soldier at the front, he sets spurs to his horse and canters over the lines in order to surrender to the enemy; he sets off for Russia or for Spain, following his nose, carrying no letters of recommendation, and without having troubled to ask himself why he is going or whither. All his decisions are like unexpected pistol shots, the fruit of a sudden whim, of a determination to escape from boredom. So unexpectedly do these impulses hurl him out of one situation into another, that he is often startled, and rubs his eyes in his surprise. Indeed, he has to thank his bold reliance upon casual promptings for the richness of his experience. One who acts logically, one who calculates every step, does not become an adventurer; and a careful strategist will never enjoy such wonderful chances.

Nothing, therefore, could be more fallacious than the way in which many of our imaginative writers who choose Casanova as a hero of a play or a novel depict him as endowed with a thoroughly alert intelligence, as being of a reflective type, as Faust and Mephistopheles rolled into one. All his impetus is the outcome of his failure to reflect, of his amoral heedlessness. Instil no more than a drop or two of sentimentality into his blood, burden him with self-knowledge and a sense of responsibility, and he will no longer be Casanova; drape him Byronically, add a conscience to the ingredients of which he is composed, and you will have an alien being. His essence is unreflection. Unreflectingly, he grasps at every toy that comes within his reach; at women, at pleasures, at other people's purses. In this, he is not driven by daimonic, by elemental

forces; the only elemental force that drives Casanova has a commonplace name and a familiar, stupid countenance —is nothing other than boredom. Since he has an absolutely vacant mind, has no inner resources, he can only escape infinite boredom by an incessant recurrence of objective experiences; without the oxygen of adventure, he is suffocated. Hence his insatiable greed for whatever he has not yet had, for anything different from what he has known; hence his unappeasable hunger for new experiences. Having no inner source of productivity, he must unceasingly assimilate vital substance from without; but this voracious appetite is utterly different from the daimonic urge of the essentially masterful and acquisitive temperament—that of a Napoleon, who must add land to land and kingdom to kingdom, impelled by a thirst for infinity; or that of a Don Juan, who must seduce one woman after another, that he may know himself to be autocrat of another infinity, the world of woman. Casanova, who is nothing more than a pleasure seeker, does not traffic in such superlatives; he is merely on the lookout for a continuity of pleasure. He is not like the man of action, not like the man of the spirit, whom a fanatical illusion drives on towards a dangerous tension of feeling; he wants nothing more than the genial warmth of enjoyment, the sparkling delight of the game; adventures, adventures, adventures, ever varying; occupation for the ego, reinforcement of life. Above all, not to be alone; not to shiver in a frosty vacancy of solitude!

Look at Casanova when entertainment is lacking. Then, every sort of rest becomes to him a terrible unrest. He arrives at eventide in a strange town. Nothing will induce him to spend the last hours of the day in his room, communing with his thoughts, or reading a book. He

snuffs the wind eagerly, to see if it brings with it any scent of amusement. In default of better, the chambermaid at the inn can help to keep him warm as he lies abed that night. Lounging at the bar, he will hold converse with chance comers; he will play faro with cardsharpers in any low gaming house; will spend the night with the most pitiful harlot rather than sleep alone: always the sense of inner vacancy drives him into converse with his fellows, for only through friction with other living creatures can his own vitality be kept up. Directly he is alone, he becomes one of the gloomiest, one of the most bored of men. We see this in his writings, the memoirs alone excepted. It is plain during the lonely years at Dux, where he speaks of boredom as "hell," as "the inferno which Dante forgot to describe." Just as a whipping-top must be incessantly lashed if it is to be kept spinning, so Casanova needs an incessant spurring from without. Like so many other adventurers, he is an adventurer because of his lack of spiritual energy.

That is why, as soon as the natural tension of life begins to flag, he has recourse to the artificial tension of gaming. At the gaming table he can find an abbreviated recapitulation of the tension of life, artificial dangers and artificial rescues. The gaming table is the asylum of all men of the fleeting hour, the perpetual solace of the idle. At the gaming table, he can enjoy a stormy ebb and flow of the feelings; the empty seconds, the weary hours, are filled with the titillation of anxiety, with shuddering expectation. Gambling, therefore, like nothing else in the world with the doubtful exception of women, solaces with spurious adventures the man who is weary of himself, and serves better than anything else to occupy one who has no inner resources and occupations. Never was any one more

hopelessly subject to the lure of the gaming table than Casanova. Just as he cannot look on a woman without longing to possess her, so he cannot see money on a gaming table without putting fingers into his pockets to take out his own stake. Even when he recognizes in the man keeping the bank a notorious plunderer, a colleague in cardsharping, he will still hazard his last ducat, knowing perfectly well that he will lose it. Casanova himself, beyond question—although the memoirs are chary of acknowledging that which police records place beyond dispute—was one of the cleverest cardsharpers of his day; and for all his skill in other forms of roguery, and his incidental earnings as a souteneur, cardsharping was his chief means of subsistence. Nothing, then, can show his obsession with the passion for gambling, nothing can manifest his craze for games of chance, more plainly than this, that, although he was himself a plunderer, he would continually allow himself to be plundered because he could not resist the gambler's lure. Just as a prostitute, whose money is earned laboriously enough, will hand over these hard-earned gains to her bully simply in order to experience in actuality the pleasures she simulates in intercourse with her ordinary clients, so does Casanova disburse to past masters at the game the funds he has impudently filched from novices. Not once, but twenty times, a hundred times, does he lose on the turn of a card all that he has gained by arduous cheating. This is what stamps him as gambler in blood and bone, that he does not play in order to win (how tedious that would be!) but in order to play; just as he does not live in order to be rich, happy, and comfortable, but simply in order to live, being here likewise the born gambler. He never looks for a final relief of tension. What he wants is perpetual tension, the

unceasing alternation of red and black, of spades and diamonds. Only in these perpetual ups and downs does he find contentment for his nerves.

In ordinary life, as at the gaming table, he needs these gains and losses, the conquest and discarding of women, the contrast between poverty and riches, unending adventure. Inasmuch as even such a life as his, ceaselessly varying though it be like a moving picture on the screen, nevertheless has intervals, sudden breaks, sudden surprises, and sudden storms, he fills in these empty pauses with the artificial tension of the gaming table. Thanks to his mad ventures here, he is able to achieve the amazing oscillations of fortune, his swift ascents to the zenith, and his no less swift plunges to the nadir. To-day his pockets are stuffed with gold, he is a grand seigneur, with two servants standing at the back of his coach; to-morrow he has had to sell his diamonds to a Jew, and even to pawn his breeches (this is not written in jest, but is literally true, for the pawn-ticket was found at Zurich). That is how our arch-adventurer likes to live, moving on from explosion to explosion of fortune and misfortune. Enjoying hazard for its own sake, again and again he stakes his life upon a cast. Ten times, in duels, he stood in the very jaws of death. A score of times he was in imminent danger of the pentitentiary or the galleys. Millions passed into his hands and out again, and he never troubled to save. For the very reason that he gave himself thus unreservedly to the game of life, enjoying to the full every woman, every moment, every adventure; for that very reason, though he was to drag out his declining years as a poor pensioner in a strange land, he attained his highest aim—an infinite abundance of life.

HOMO EROTICUS

Seducer, say you? Nay, I was but there
When Nature, with her splendid witchery,
Began her work. Nor must you dub me false,
For I am ever thankful in my heart.

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER: CASANOVA IN SPA

He is a dilettante, and generally a second-rate one at that, in all the arts God has created: he writes lame verses and dull philosophical disquisitions; he can play the fiddle passably; and the best one can say of his conversation is that it shows an encyclopædic smattering. He may count as an expert in all the games of the devil's making, such as faro, biribi, dicing, dominoes, the confidence trick, alchemy, and diplomacy. But in the art of love, Casanova excels all his rivals. Here his manifold talents, which are fragmentary and botched for the most part, combine with a subtle chemistry to make of him the perfect erotist; in this matter, he is indisputably a genius of first rank. His physique is enough to show that he was designed for the service of Cytherea. Nature, parsimonious as a rule, has been free-handed here, equipping him liberally with sap, sensuality, vigour, and beauty; a man apt to delight women's hearts, a thoroughly masculine creature, strong and supple as steel, a well-tempered example of his sex, massive in mould, and yet admirable in form. You would make a big mistake were you

to imagine Casanova, the conqueror of women, to have been of the delicate type of male beauty which is nowadays in vogue. This bel uomo is no ephebe; nothing of the sort! He is a stallion of a man, with the shoulders of the Farnese Hercules, the muscles of a Roman wrestler, the bronzed beauty of a gypsy lad, the impudence and audacity of a condottiere, and the sexual ardour of a satyr. His powers of resistance are stupendous. Four attacks of venereal disease, two doses of poison, a dozen sword thrusts, the terrible years passed in the Leads at Venice and in pestilential Spanish jails, hurried journeys from Sicilian heats to the frosts of Muscovy—none of these things abate his phallic energy by a jot. No matter when or where, the merest spark from a woman's eyes, the first intimation of a woman's nearness, suffices to set his invincible sexuality aflame. For a busy quarter of a century he is invariably the Messer Sempre Pronto, the Mr. Ever Ready, of the Italian farces, indefatigably teaches women the higher mathematics as the most efficient of their lovers, and up till the age of forty knows only by hearsay of that distressing fiasco which Stendhal, in his treatise *De l'amour,* thinks important enough to discuss in a supplementary section. A body that is never weary when appetite calls, an appetite which never fails, a passion which no extravagance can impoverish, a gambler's impulse that shrinks from no hazard—rarely indeed has nature bestowed upon any master so perfectly stringed and sensitive a bodily instrument, so splendid a viola d'amore for playing all the tunes of love. In any and every profession, for perfect mastery there is requisite, not only inborn talent, but also incessant concentration upon the pursuit. There must be a monogamic devotion to the chosen occupation, com-

plete absorption in some particular direction; through that alone can absolute proficiency be secured. As the musician cultivates music, as the poet gives himself up to writing of verses or the miser to the hoarding of money, as the fanatic for sport throws everything else aside in his passion to break the record, an amorist who is to outdo all others must regard the wooing, the coveting, and the possession of woman as the most important, nay as the only, good in the world. The passions are jealous one of another, and for this reason he must have nothing to do with any other passion than that of love, must find therein the whole meaning of the world. Casanova, fickle though he be, remains constant in his passion for woman. Offer him the doge's ring of Venice, all the wealth of the Fuggers, a patent of nobility, a house and a comfortable appointment, fame as a general or an author; he will contemptuously throw aside these worthless trifles to hurl himself into the chase of some woman he has not yet possessed, to enjoy her feminine aroma, the delicious thrill of certain-uncertainty that she will yield to him in the end. Everything else the world can promise—honour, office and dignity, wealth, any pleasure you like to name—he will disregard for the sake of a love adventure, and even for the barest possibility of such. He does not need to be positively in love; the mere inkling that a love adventure is at hand is enough to arouse anticipatory delight.

Let me give one example out of a hundred, that of the episode which you will find at the beginning of the second volume, when Casanova is posting to Naples on important business. At the inn where he has halted for a brief space, he catches sight of a pretty woman in a neighbouring room, in a stranger's bed (that of a Hungarian

captain). Nay, what makes the matter more absurd is that he does not yet know whether she is pretty or not, for she is hidden under the bedclothes. He has merely heard laughter, a young woman's laughter, and thereupon his nostrils quiver. He knows nothing about her, whether she is attractive or the reverse, likely to be compliant or not, whether she is a possible conquest at all. Nevertheless he casts aside all his other plans, sends his horses back to the stable, and remains in Parma, merely because this off-chance of a love adventure has turned his head.

Thus does Casanova act after his kind anywhere and everywhere. By day or by night, in the morning or in the evening, he will commit any folly in the hope of spending an hour with an unknown woman. Where he covets, he grudges no price; where he wishes to conquer, he recks of no resistance. Wishing to see a woman once more, a German burgomaster's lady of whom he does not even know whether she can make him happy, he forces his way, in Cologne, into a company where he has not been invited, where he knows himself to be unwelcome, and has to accept a rating from the host and to endure the derision of the other guests. But what does the rutting stallion care for the blows of the whip that are rained on him? Casanova will cheerfully spend the whole night in a damp cellar, will endure cold and hunger and the company of rats uncomplainingly, for the chance that when dawn comes he will be rewarded by an hour of not overcomfortable amorous dalliance. He will, ever and again, risk sword thrusts, pistol shots, invectives, extortions, disease, humiliations—and for what? Not, as would be comprehensible enough, for an Anadyomene, for the pearl of womanhood, infinitely worthy of a man's love. He will

risk all these things for Mistress Everywoman, for Mistress Anybody, simply because she is a woman, because she is a member of the opposite, the coveted, sex. Every pimp, every souteneur, can plunder this famous seducer; every complaisant husband or easygoing brother can involve him in the most discreditable affairs—provided his senses are stimulated. And when are they not stimulated? When is Casanova's erotic thirst fully quenched? Semper novarum rerum cupidus, always eager for some new thing, always questing after new prey, his lusts are incessantly aquiver for the unknown. A town without a love adventure is no town for him; the world without women is not a world. Just as his lungs need air, and his muscles need alternation of movement and repose, so does this virile body of his need the recurrent tensions and discharges of amorous embraces. Not for a month, not for a week, scarcely even for a day, can he feel at ease without women. In Casanova's vernacular, abstinence means, very simply, dullness and boredom.

Since he has so gargantuan an appetite, and since he satisfies it so persistently, we can hardly be surprised to find that the quality of his feminine provision is not always of the best. So champion a sensualist cannot afford to be fastidious; he cannot be an epicure, and must be content with the role of glutton. Consequently, it is no particular recommendation to a woman that she has been one of Casanova's innumerable mistresses. She need not have been a Helen of Troy, nor yet a chaste virgin, nor yet remarkably witty or wellbred or attractive, in order to enjoy the privilege of this gentleman's embraces. Enough for him, generally speaking, that she should be woman, vagina, his polar opposite in matters of sex, formed by nature to enable him to discharge his libido. Beauty, shrewdness, ten-

derness—no doubt these are agreeable accessories, but altogether subsidiary to the main point, sheer femininity; femininity, incorporated in a perpetually new shape, is all that Casanova desires.

You must rid yourself of any romanticist or æsthetic notions concerning this extensive Parc aux Cerfs. Casanova's collection, like that of any professional amorist (perforce undiscriminating), is of unequal quality, and is anything but a gallery of beauty. You will certainly find there some sweet and tender girls, such as might have been painted by Casanova's fellow-countrymen Guido Reni and Raphael; others might have been limned by Rubens, or sketched by Boucher upon silk fans: but side by side with these you will find English street-walkers, whose hard and impudent faces only the pencil of a Hogarth could have drawn; hideous old witches who might have graced the canvases of Goya; poxy drabs in the style of Toulouse-Lautrec; rough peasant-women and servant-girls such as Breughel might have painted—a medley of beauty and foulness, wit and vulgarity, a chance assembly at a fair, thrown together haphazard without assortment or choice.

For when his passions run away with him, this panerotist has coarse nerves, and his fancy wanders into strange and devious paths. One who is ever at the mercy of his amorous impulses knows no preferences. He pounces on the first comer; fishes in all waters, be they clean or dirty, be they fenced or unfenced. This boundless and reckless eroticism knows nothing of the restrictions imposed by morality or good taste, by station or by age; it knows nothing of above or below, of too early or too late. Many of the objects of Casanova's passion are so young that in our stricter times his indulgence

would certainly have brought down on him the heavy hand of the law; and others are women well advanced in years, including that septuagenarian ruin, the Marchioness of Urfé—assuredly the most preposterous love-affair which ever a man has shamelessly recorded for the information of posterity. This most unclassical Walpurgisnacht ranges through all countries and all classes. Delicate girls, in the shuddering thrill of their first shame; distinguished ladies wearing prieeless lace and resplendent with jewels; the scum of brothels; randy old women —all join hands in this witches' dance. The niece replaces the aunt, the daughter the mother, in the still-warm bed; procuresses give Casanova their own daughters, and husbands make it easy for him to possess their wives; soldiers' wenches and ladies of rank and station enjoy the pleasure of his embraces on the same night. You must not think it possible to depict the love adventures of Casanova after the graceful manner of eighteenth century pastoral etchings. You must, for once, have the courage to contemplate undiscriminating eroticism in all its crude contradictions, in its unmistakable realism, as the pandemonium of masculine sensuality.

Such a lust as Casanova's has no exceptions. It is lured equally by the abstruse and by the everyday; there is no anomaly which does not inflame it, nor any absurdity which can chill it. Lousy beds, dirty linen, offensive odours, comradeship with pimps, the presence of spectators, extortion, the diseases that attend indiscriminate venery, are inconsiderable trifles for this divine bull who, like the second Jupiter, wishes to embrace Europa, to clasp the whole world of woman in his arms, to sate his almost maniacal lust. But in one respect, his passions are scrupulously masculine. Stormy as is the raging torrent

of his blood, it never flows outside the natural channel. Casanova's impulses are exclusively directed towards members of the other sex. He loaths contact with a castrato, and angrily whips a Ganymede out of his path. Despite all his vagaries, he remains constant to the world of women. But within this world his ardour knows no limits.

That is what gives Casanova his unprecedented power over women, that is what makes him irresistible —the Pan-like power of his rushing impetus, the elemental force of his sexual appetite. The hidden passion in women's own blood responds to this fierce passion of the male animal, to the tremendous ardour of the opposite sex. They let him take possession of them because he is fully possessed by them; they fall to him because he has fallen to them—and not so much to the one woman in the case, as to the plurality of women, to the universal femininity in the particular woman of the moment, to the opposite pole of his own sex. Intuitively they feel that here at length they have encountered one to whom nothing is more important than woman. He is not like nearly all other men, wearied by affairs and duties; now listless and husbandly, now eager and ardent; his wooing no more than a secondary and occasional matter. He assails them with the torrential might of his nature; he does not spare, he spends; he does not hesitate, does not pick and choose. In very truth, he gives himself to the uttermost, to the last drop of lust in his body, to the last ducat in his purse; always and unhesitatingly he is ready to sacrifice everything else to a woman because she is a woman, and at the moment can quench his thirst for woman.

To Casanova, the first and last word of enjoyment, and all enjoyment that lies between, is to see women happy, amazed with delight, rapturous, laughing, carried out of

themselves. As long as he has money left, he lavishes presents on the woman of his momentary choice, flatters her vanity with luxurious trifles, loves to deck her out splendidly, loves to wrap her in costly laces before he unclothes her that he may enjoy her nakedness, loves to surprise her with gifts more expensive than she has ever dreamed of, loves to overwhelm her with the tokens of his extravagant passion. He is like one of the gods of Hellas, a bounteous Zeus, showering on his beloved the golden rain of his ardent passion. In this, too, he resembles Zeus, that thereafter he speedily vanishes into the clouds. "I have loved women madly, but I have always preferred freedom even to them." This increases his attraction, for the stormy phenomena of his appearance and disappearance enshrine him in their memory as something unwonted, which has brought them rapturous delight, so that association with him is never staled by habit.

Every one of these women feels that Casanova would be impossible as a husband, as a faithful Céladon; but as a lover, as a god of a passing night, they will never forget him. Though he forsakes them one and all, none of them would have had him different from what he was. Casanova, therefore, need only be himself, faithful to the unfaithfulness of his passion, and he will win every woman. A man such as this has no need to wear false colours, to pretend to be other than he is; he need not devise lyrical arts of seduction. Casanova need merely let his frank passion run its course, and this does the wooing for him. It is vain, therefore, for timid youths to devour the sixteen volumes of his Ars Amandi, in the hope of learning the master's secret. The craft of seduction can be no more learned from books than the writing

of poetry. There is nothing to be learned from Casanova; there is no peculiar Casanova-trick, no Casanova-technique of conquest and taming. His only secret is the straightforwardness of his desire, the elemental onslaught of his passionate nature.

I said just now "straightforward," but I might just as well have said "upright" or "honest"—astonishing words to apply to Casanova. No matter; though at the gaming table he has no scruple about using marked cards, and though in any other field than love he is the most accomplished of cheats, where love is concerned we must admit that he shows a straightforward honesty of his own kind. Casanova's relationship to women is truly honourable, because purely passionate, purely sensual. It may seem deplorable, but it is true that insincerity in love makes its first appearance with the intermingling of higher feelings. The body, stupid worthy fellow that he is, does not lie; he never intensifies his appetites beyond the naturally attainable. Not until intellect and sentiment come to play their part in the game, not until their soaring pinions are at work, does passion become exaggerated, and therefore false, introducing fancied eternities into our earthly relations. It is easy, therefore, for Casanova, who never prates of transcending the realm of the bodily, to keep his promises; for, supplied from the well-stored magazine of his sensuality, he exchanges pleasure for pleasure, the bodily for the bodily, and never runs into debt in the spiritual sphere.

That is why the women who have passed the night with Casanova do not feel that they have been cheated of platonic expectations. For the very reason that he has never demanded from them any other raptures than the orgasms of the flesh, for the very reason that he has never

made any pretence of an eternity of sentiment, there will be no subsequent phase of disillusionment. You have every right, if you wish, to describe such eroticism as love of the baser sort, as purely sexual, unspiritual, and animal; but you must not dispute its straightforwardness, its honesty. Surely this braggart, with his frank desire for possession, deals more honestly, deals better, with women than do the romanticist enthusiasts, the "great lovers," like (to give one example) the sensual-supersensual wooer Faust, who, in his extravagance, swears by sun and moon and stars, calls God and the universe to witness the nobility of his feelings for Gretchen, in order (as Mephistopheles has long foreseen) to end these high flights in a thoroughly Casanovese fashion, and, in the most earthly manner possible, to rob the poor fourteen-year-old girl of the treasure of her virginity. The path of a Goethe or a Byron is strewn with feminine wreckage. Men of a higher, a more cosmic nature, lift their companions to such sublime levels that the poor women, while unable to adapt themselves permanently to this stellar atmosphere, are unable, thereafter, to readapt themselves satisfactorily to their earthly habitat. Casanova's flash of earthly passion, on the other hand, does very little harm to their souls. He is not responsible for any shipwrecks, for any outbreaks of despair. He has made a great many women happy, but has made no women hysterical. From the episode of sensual adventure, they return undamaged to everyday life, to their husbands, or to other lovers, as the case may be. Not one of them commits suicide, or falls into a decline. Their internal equilibrium has never been disturbed, for Casanova's unambiguous and radically healthy passion has never touched the mainspring of their destiny. He has blown athwart them like a tropical hurricane, and after

he has passed they will bloom in a more ardent sensuality. He has made them glow without singeing them; has conquered them without destroying them; has seduced them without corrupting them. Precisely because his erotic assault has been confined to the resistant tissues of the epidermis, and has never reached the vulnerable depths of the soul, his conquests never lead to catastrophes. Consequently, there is nothing daimonic about Casanova as a lover; he never brings tragedy into a woman's life. In the drama of love, the world's stage knows no more brilliant an episodist than he, but he is nothing more than an episodist.

Recognizing the utter lack of spirituality in Casanova's love adventures, we cannot fail to ask ourselves whether this libido which is purely physical, which is inflamed by the mere rustling of a woman's petticoat, is entitled to the name of love. Certainly not in a sense which would put Casanova, homo eroticus vel eroticissimus, in the same category with Werther or Saint-Preux, the immortal lovers. The sense of spiritual exuberance aroused by the sight of the beloved, a feeling akin to piety, which makes the lover regard his beloved as of one nature with the universe and with God, this ecstatic expansion of the soul under the influence of Eros, remains unknown to Casanova from the first day to the last. Nothing that he has ever written, no letter, no verses, betrays the existence in him of any amatory sentiments beyond those directly related to physical possession; and it is doubtful whether we can ascribe to him the faculty of true passion. For this "amour passion," as Stendhal terms it, is, by its invariable uniqueness, incompatible with any such diurnal ordinariness; it is necessarily of rare occurrence, the outcome of a prolonged storing of the sensibilities, which are at

length, like a lightning flash, discharged on the beloved object. There is no such thrift about Casanova. He squanders his ardours too often, relieves his tensions too frequently, to be capable of such high intensities of discharge. His passion, flowing away at the purely erotic level, knows nothing of the ecstasy of uniqueness. We need have no anxiety, therefore, when he seems reduced to despair because Henriette or the beautiful Portuguese lady has left him. We know that he will not blow out his brains; nor are we surprised to find him, a day or two later, amusing himself in the first convenient brothel. If the nun C. C. is unable to come over from Murano, and the lay-sister M. M. arrives in her place, Casanova is speedily consoled. After all, one woman is as good as another! It soon becomes plain to us that, as an arch-erotist, Casanova was never really in love with any one of the innumerable women he possessed. He was in love with the plurality, with the incessant variations, with the multiplicity of love adventures.

He himself made a dangerous admission when he said: "Already I realized obscurely that love is nothing beyond a more or less lively curiosity." That is all. He is curious. He wants to repeat his experiences again and again, and always with a different woman. It is not the individual that stimulates him, but the variation, the new and ever new combination upon Eros' inexhaustible chessboard. His taking and leaving is as simple and natural a function as inspiration and expiration. That is why Casanova, as an artist, was never able to make any one of his thousand women a really lifelike figure to us. His descriptions of them arouse a suspicion that he never troubled to look his mistress lovingly in the face, but was content to regard her in "certo punto." What rouses

him, what "inflames" him, is always the same. A true southerner, he is interested in the grossly sensual, in "country matters," in a woman's most obviously sexual characteristics. Again and again, till we grow weary of the iteration, he describes "alabaster breasts," "divine hemispheres," "the figure of a Juno"; and again and again he refers to the chance disclosure of "more intimate charms"; all the things that a lad in his salad days gets excited about in a servant wench. Thus, of the countless Henriettes, Irenes, Babettes, Mariuccias, Ermelines, Marcolinas, Ignazias, Lucies, Esthers, Saras, and Claras (one might almost write every name that has been given to a woman), little remains beyond a flesh-coloured jelly of voluptuous feminine bodies, a bacchantic medley of figures, functions, and enthusiasms—reminding us of the musings of a man who wakes in the morning with a sore head, and finds it difficult to recall where and with what boon companions he got drunk overnight. Of all the women he describes, not a single one moves before us vividly in the body, to say nothing of the soul. He has enjoyed them only skin-deep, has known them exclusively in the flesh.

Thus the accurate yard-stick of art discloses to us even more surely than life itself how immense a difference there is between mere eroticism and love in the true sense of the term; between that which wins all and retains nothing, and that which achieves little but by spiritual power makes the transient perdurable. One single experience of Stendhal's (in truth, no hero in the field of love) contains, through sublimation, more spiritual substance than three thousand nights of Casanova's. As for the possibilities of love's most blissful spiritual ecstasies, Casanova's sixteen volumes give us less of an inkling of them than the brief-

est of Goethe's lyrics. Casanova's memoirs, therefore, regarded from the upland, are seen to be a statistical work of reference rather than a romance, the history of a campaign rather than a work of creative authorship; they are a codex eroticus, an occidental Kama-sutra, an Odyssey of the wanderings of the flesh, an Iliad of the eternal masculine rut for the eternal Helen. Their value depends upon quantity, not quality; upon multiformity, and not upon spiritual significance.

For the very reason that his sexual experiences were so multifarious, for the very reason that his physical potency was so unexampled, to our world, which is for the most part only interested in "records" and rarely measures spiritual capacity, Giacomo Casanova has become symbolical as phallic conqueror, has become proverbial, thus receiving the crown of popular acclamation. When we speak of a Casanova, we mean an irresistible champion, a devourer of women, a master seducer. In masculine mythology, the name is the counterpart of Helen, or Phryne, or Ninon de Lenclos, in feminine. The son of a Venetian strolling player has received the unexpected honour of being incarnated as an amatory hero for all time. No doubt he has to share his pedestal with a companion, in this case a legendary figure. Beside him stands a man of bluer blood, obscurer nature, and more daimonic type—his Spanish rival, Don Juan. The latent contrast between these two masters in the art of seduction has often been pointed out (most happily, as far as I know, by Oscar A. H. Schmitz); but the comparison, or rather the antithesis, has no more been exhausted than has the antithesis between Leonardo and Michelangelo, Tolstoy and Dostoeffsky, Plato and Aristotle.

The comparison between Casanova and Don Juan is

reiterated generation after generation, each generation in turn being fascinated by the diversity-in-likeness of these two primal forms of eroticism. Although Casanova and Don Juan resemble one another in this respect, that they are both birds of prey, so far as women are concerned, continually pouncing on victims whose alarm is tinctured with delight, there is an essential distinction between the two types. As contrasted with Casanova, easygoing, unprincipled, free from inhibitions, Don Juan is cribbed by the regulations of a caste; Don Juan is a hidalgo, a Spanish nobleman, and even in revolt he remains a Catholic by sentiment. As a Spaniard pur sangre, in the depths of his heart, he is profoundly influenced by the concept of honour; and as a mediæval Catholic he unwittingly accepts the ecclesiastical valuation of all carnality as "sin." From this transcendental perspective of Christianity, extra-conjugal love is satanic, is forbidden by God's ordinances, is a heresy of the flesh—and is all the more alluring in consequence! Casanova, the free-thinker, a child of the Renaissance, laughs heartily at such antiquated ideas. For Don Juan, woman is the instrument of sin, and exists only to subserve the purposes of "evil." Her very being is a seduction and a danger, so that what seems to be the most perfect virtue in a woman is but a semblance, and the trail of the serpent is over it all. Don Juan does not believe in the purity, the chastity, of any of this devil's brood; he knows that under their clothes they are all equally naked, all equally accessible to seduction. He is urged on by an inner impulse to prove woman's fatal weakness by a thousand and one instances; to convince himself, the world, and God that all these unapproachable doñas, these professedly faithful wives, these ingenuous girls, these brides of Christ, are without exception willing to admit the right

sort of wooer to their beds; he wants to prove that they are only "anges à l'église et singes au lit." Such a conviction, such a determination, is what drives him onward incessantly to renewed and reiterated acts of seduction.

Nothing, therefore, could be more misguided than to represent Don Juan, the arch-enemy of the female sex, as amoroso, as the universal lover of women, seeing that he is never moved by true love towards any of them. The elemental force that impels him against women is the primal hate that inspires the male. When he takes possession of a woman, he is not seizing that which he wishes to have for himself, but is taking away from her something he wishes to deprive her of, is despoiling her of her most precious treasure, her honour. His lust is not, like Casanova's, an affair of the seminal vesicles, but an affair of the brain. Spiritually, though not corporeally, he is a sadist, eager to degrade, to shame, to humiliate femininity at large. His enjoyment is reached by devious paths; it depends upon an imaginative anticipation of the despair the woman will feel when she has been possessed, dishonoured, disclosed in all her fleshliness. For Don Juan, therefore, the pleasures of the chase are intensified by its difficulties, in contrast with Casanova, who enjoys most the quarry which he finds easiest to run down. For the Spaniard, the more unapproachable a woman, and the more unlikely it seems that he will be able to win her, the greater and more convincing (as proof of his thesis) the ultimate triumph. Where there is no resistance, Don Juan finds no attraction. We cannot fancy him spending the night, like Casanova, with a harlot in a common stew. His senses are only stimulated when he is engaged in the devilish work of debasing what he enjoys, of pushing his partner into sin, of leading her to commit a unique offence, one that

can never be repeated, that of the first act of adultery, that of surrendering her virginity, or that of violating her sacred vow of chastity. As soon as he has had his will of such a woman, the expèriment is finished, and the object of seduction has become a mere number in a register. He never wants to look caressingly again on the companion of last night, the one and only night. As little as the sportsman cares for the bird he has brought down, just so little does this professional seducer care about his victim once the experiment is over. He must go on with the hunt, must sacrifice the greatest possible number to his primal impulse, must continue for ever and a day to prove that all women are frail. Don Juan knows no rest, and in truth finds no enjoyment. He is the sworn enemy of woman, and the devil has equipped him with everything he needs for the campaign: wealth, youth, birth, bodily charm, and, most important of all, absolute callousness.

In actual fact a woman, as soon as she has been defeated by his coldly calculating technique, regards Don Juan as the devil incarnate. All his victims hate to-day as ardently as they loved yesterday their arch-enemy, who on the morning after possession wounds them to the heart with his cold and scornful laughter. (Mozart has immortalized it!) They are ashamed of their weakness; they rail at the villain who has deceived them; and in his person they loathe the whole male sex. Doña Anna, Doña Elvira, and all the rest, having once yielded to his calculated impetuosity, remain thenceforward embittered, poisoned in spirit. The women, on the other hand, who have given themselves to Casanova, thank him as if he were a god, glad to remember his ardent embraces, for he has done nothing to wound their feelings, nothing to mortify them in their womanhood; he has bestowed upon

them a new confidence in their own personality. The very thing which the Spanish satanist, Don Juan, forces them to despise as the depth of debasement, as bestial rut, as the most devilish of woman's weaknesses—the glowing ardours of the moment of surrender—Casanova, delicate master of the erotic art, persuades them to recognize as the true meaning, the holiest duty, of their feminine nature. Refusal, unwillingness to surrender, says this gentle priest and vigorous epicurean, is the sin against the holy ghost of the flesh, against the god-given significance of nature. Thanks to his thankfulness, rapt by his raptures, they feel themselves freed from all blame and unloosed from every inhibition. With a caressive hand, when he strips them of their clothing he strips them of all shyness and all anxiety—these half-women, who do not become wholly women until they have given themselves. He fills them with delight because he is himself delighted; he exculpates them for their enjoyment by his own grateful ecstasies. Casanova does not fully enjoy himself with a woman unless she shares his delight. "Four-fifths of my pleasure has always consisted in making women happy." For him, pleasure must be set off with pleasure, just as the lover demands love in return. His Herculean labours are undertaken to exhaust and delight not so much his own body as that of the woman he clasps in his arms.

Since he is thus an altruist in love, it would obviously be absurd for him to use force or artifice in order to secure the physical enjoyment he covets. Never, like Don Juan, does he desire crude possession; he must have a willing surrender. We have no right, therefore, to style him a seducer. He invites a woman to join him in a new and fascinating game, in which he would like the

weary old world (burdened by inhibitions and scruples) to participate, finding a fresh impetus in Eros. Freedom from scruples, this and nothing else releases us from the chains which bind us to earth. Every woman who gives herself to him becomes more fully a woman, because she has grown more fully conscious, more pleasure-loving, freer from restraints. In her body, which she has hitherto regarded with indifference, she now discovers new and surprising sources of delight. For the first time, beneath the veil of shame she sees the beauty of her own femininity. A master spendthrift has taught her how to spend, how to give pleasure for pleasure, and not to ask for any meaning beyond that which she feels quickening in her senses. But it is not really he who has won the woman; her conquest has been effected by this joyfully accepted form of enjoyment. Hence new devotees of the faith become propagandists. A sister brings a sister to the altar, a mother hands her daughter over to this gentle teacher, every one of his mistresses invites others to join in the dance. Just as the sisterhood of women, in one of its manifestations, leads each of Don Juan's victims to warn (how vainly!) her sisters against the enemy of their sex, so does this same sense of sisterhood, in another of its manifestations, make the women who have been loved by Casanova proclaim him as the man who showers divine blessings on their sex. Just as he, when he loves a woman, loves in her woman as a whole, so do women love in him the symbol of the loving man and master.

As conqueror, then, Casanova is not a magician, not a wonder-worker in the realm of love. His powers of conquest are nature personified, they are nature's kindly powers; and the secret of his success is his amazing virility. Thoroughly natural in his desires, perfectly straight-

forward in his sensuality, he brings into love an admirable common sense, an accurate vital balance. He does not lift women to the level of saints, nor does he lower them to that of demons; he merely desires them on the earthly plane as companions in the game of love, as the god-given complements of male energy and desire. Although a more ardent being than all the lyric poets, he never exaggerates the idea of love to make of it the essential meaning of the world, for whose sake the stars circle round our little globe, for whose sake the seasons wax and wane, for whose sake mankind breathes and dies; never, like the pious Novalis, does he make of love the "Amen of the universe." With Hellenic frankness he looks upon Eros as nothing more and nothing less than the most entrancing enjoyment earth has to offer. Thus does Casanova bring love down out of imaginary heavens, down into the life of this world, where he can enjoy it in the person of every woman who has the courage and the will for joy. At the very time when Rousseau the Frenchman was discovering sentimentalism in love, and when Werther the German was discovering enthusiastic melancholy, Casanova the Italian was, by the impetus of his life, demonstrating the pagan cheerfulness of love to be the best helper in the ever necessary work of freeing the world from its burdens.

YEARS IN OBSCURITY

How often in my life have I done something which was repugnant to me, and which I could not understand. But I was driven onward by a secret power, which, wittingly, I was unable to resist.

CASANOVA, IN THE MEMOIRS

You have no right to blame women for surrendering so easily to the great seducer. Every woman who encounters him falls into temptation, and is ready to be enthralled by the fiery charm of his art of life. Let us admit the fact that it is hard for a man to read Casanova's memoirs without envy. Who is there, engaged in routine occupations in this fenced and specializing century of ours, who is not seized from time to time by the spirit of adventure? In such moments, our thoughts turn to the mad doings of this arch-adventurer; his life filled full of snatchings and enjoyments, his thoroughgoing epicureanism, seem to us wiser and more real than our own orderly preoccupation with the things of the spirit; his philosophy seems more vital than the peevish doctrines of Schopenhauer or the cold dogmatism of Kant. What a poor thing at such moments appears our existence, safeguarded only by renunciation, when compared with his! It is with a sore heart that we recognize all we are paying for our spiritual poise and our life of moral endeavour—we are paying for it in restraints!

Such is our fate. In so far as we try to look beyond

the fleeting hour and to direct our endeavours towards some future aim, we deprive this present hour of some of its vitality; and in so far as we seek to transcend the present, we rob ourselves of present enjoyment. We look before and after, and the ball-and-chain of conscience clanks at our heels as we walk. We have surrendered ourselves as prisoners to our own selves, and that is why we are so heavy-footed. But Casanova is light-hearted and light-footed; he makes all women his own; he speeds across all lands; he drifts before the winds of chance through all the heavens and all the hells. No real man, therefore, I repeat, can read Casanova's memoirs in certain moods without feeling envious, without feeling himself to be a bungler as compared with this master of the art of life. Often—again and again and again—one would rather be Casanova than be Goethe, Michelangelo, or Balzac. Smile though we may, a little cynically, at the literary affectations and the rodomontade of this philosophically draped rascal, nevertheless in the sixth, the tenth, the twelfth volume we are often inclined to regard him as the wisest man in the world, and to look upon his philosophy of superficiality as the shrewdest and most entrancing of all doctrines.

Fortunately Casanova himself cures our prompting towards undue admiration. His register of the art of life has one serious flaw in it—he has forgotten old age. An epicurean technique of enjoyment, a technique entirely concerned with the sensual, the palpable, is exclusively based upon young and vigorous senses, upon the circulation of a young and vigorous bodily sap. As soon as the flame of life ceases to burn with youthful ardour, the whole philosophy of sensual pleasure will be found to have become an insipid, unpalatable broth. Only with

tense muscles, with firm, white teeth, can we master life in Casanova's fashion. Woe to the epicurean when the muscles grow flaccid, when the teeth begin to fall out, when the senses lose their keenness; for then this agreeable, this comfortable philosophy will certainly be found to have lost its savour. In the man of pleasure (I use that term in its cruder sense), the curve of existence is inevitably a declining one. The spendthrift has no reserves, he squanders his substance in riotous living; whereas the man of the spirit, ostensibly practising renunciation, is really storing up an ample supply of energy in an accumulator. One who has devoted himself to the things of the spirit will, even in his declining years, and often (like Goethe) at a patriarchal age, be able to experience transformations, sublimations, purifications, and transfigurations. Though his blood has cooled, his life can still rise to dizzy heights of intellectual experience; and the bold play of his thoughts compensates him for the reduced intensity of bodily function. The man who has lived only for the pleasures of the senses, on the other hand, the man to whom nothing can appeal but corporeal impacts from without, sticks fast in old age like a water-wheel when the brook that should turn it has dried up. For him, to grow old is a decline into nullity instead of a transition to novelty. Life, an inexorable creditor, demands back from him with interest what his uncontrolled senses have spent too early and too quickly. Thus it is that Casanova's wisdom ends with his happiness, his happiness with his youth. He only seems wise as long as he is handsome, victorious, and in the full possession of his bodily energies. You may envy him until he is forty years of age, but you can only pity him for the rest of his life.

Casanova's carnival, the most brightly coloured of any

ever celebrated in Venice, ends prematurely and sadly upon a sombre Ash Wednesday. We watch the shadows slowly creeping athwart his narrative, just as wrinkles form upon an ageing face. He has fewer and fewer triumphs to report, and more and more vexations to record. We find an ever more frequent mention of disagreeables (for which, of course, he is never to blame) in connection with spurious bills of exchange, false banknotes, pawned jewels; and we read less often of visits to princely courts. From London, he finds it necessary to steal away by night and in a fog, to escape the arrest that would have been inevitable a few hours later, and would have been a prelude to the gallows. From Warsaw, he is hunted away like a criminal. He is expelled both from Vienna and from Madrid. In Barcelona, he spends forty days under lock and key. Florence gives him notice to quit. In Paris, he receives a "lettre de cachet," and has no choice but to leave the beloved city. Casanova is unwanted, is as unwelcome as a louse.

We are puzzled, at first, and ask ourselves what can be amiss that, of a sudden, the world should prove so ungracious to its former favorite, should talk so much about good morals. Has there been a change for the worse in his character, that people should cold-shoulder him in this way? No, he is the same as ever, is what he will be to the end of the chapter. He has always been a humbug. What is wrong with him is that he is beginning to lack self-confidence, the victorious self-confidence of youth. Where he has sinned most, there he finds his punishment. The women are the first to forsake their darling. A poor, pitiful little Delilah inflicts a terrible wound upon this Samson in the lists of love—(a crafty, good-for-nothing baggage, Charpillon by name, in Lon-

don). This episode, the most effectively narrated of all in his memoirs, sketched with perfect artistry, is the turning-point. For the first time the experienced seducer is tricked by a woman, and not by a woman of standing, inaccessible, virtuous, and therefore refusing her favours, but by a spiteful little harlot, who makes him crazy with desire, strips him of his last coin, and refuses to allow him to lay so much as a finger upon her lecherous body. A Casanova who is contemptuously rejected though he pays and overpays; a Casanova despised, and compelled to look on while an impudent young fellow, a hairdresser's assistant, is made happy by the possession of all that he vainly covets and has paid for in hard coin—this is Casanova, wounded to the quick in his tenderest place, his vanity; and thenceforward he can never feel confident. Prematurely, when he is forty years of age, he is terrified to discover that the motor upon which his victorious progress through the world has depended is no longer working properly, and he becomes afraid that his progress will soon be arrested. "What troubled me most of all was that I must perforce admit the beginnings of that loss of power which is associated with the oncoming of age. I no longer had the careless confidence of youth." A Casanova without self-confidence, a Casanova without the overwhelming virility which has hitherto charmed women, lacking beauty and potency and money, no longer able to plume himself on being the darling both of Priapus and of Fortuna—what is he, now that he has lost this trump card?

Here is his own description: "A man of a certain age, to whom luck has become a stranger, and towards whom women have grown cold. A bird without wings, a man without virility, a lover without a mistress, a gambler

without money to stake, a tired frame without tension or beauty." No longer does he sound triumphal peals, or proclaim the exclusive wisdom of enjoyment; for the first time the dangerous word "renunciation" finds expression in his philosophy. "The days when I made women in love with me are over; I must either renounce them, or else buy their favours." Renunciation, the most incredible thought for a Casanova, has become terribly real to him. He cannot buy women without money; yet it has always been women who have kept him in funds. The wonderful circulation has come to an end, the game is finished, and life has become a serious matter for the master of all adventurers. That is why the ageing Casanova, poor Casanova, from being a man of pleasure becomes a parasite, from being a man interested in the world for its own sake becomes a spy, from being a gambler becomes a cheat and a beggar; that is why the boon companion becomes a forlorn scribbler who is always quarrelling with his housemates.

A distressing spectacle! Casanova lays down his arms. The veteran of countless love battles grows cautious and modest. Quietly and sadly the great "commediante in fortuna" retires from the stage where he has had such splendid successes. He doffs his fine clothes as "no longer suitable to my position"; takes off his ring and his diamond shoebuckles, discarding therewith his glorious arrogance; throws his philosophy under the table like a worn pack of cards; bows his neck beneath the yoke, submitting himself to the law in virtue of which withered prostitutes become procuresses, gamblers become cardsharpers, adventurers become toadies. Now that the blood has ceased to course warmly through his veins, the sometime "citoyen du monde" begins to shiver, and to suffer from

homesickness. Putting his pride in his pocket, repenting him of his offences, he begs the Venetian government for forgiveness. He writes lickspittle reports to the inquisitors, composes a patriotic booklet, a "refutatione" of the attacks on the Venetian government, in which he is not ashamed to declare that the Leads, where he had pined in prison, are "a well-ventilated place," an earthly paradise. Of these distressing episodes, there is no word in the memoirs, which end prematurely, and tell the reader nothing about the years of shame. He shrouds them in obscurity, lest he should blush; and we are inclined to congratulate ourselves for this, seeing that Casanova the toady, Casanova the police spy, conflicts too painfully with the doughty warrior of earlier days.

Thus for a few years there slinks across the Merceria a corpulent and rubicund man, who is no longer fashionably dressed. He listens attentively to all that the Venetians are saying, sits in taverns watching suspicious characters, and in the evenings writes tedious reports to the inquisitors. They are signed "Angelo Pratolini," the alias of a pardoned ex-convict, who for a few gold pieces is willing to send others to the prison in which he himself had been confined in youth, the prison whose description has made him famous. Casanova, chevalier de Seingalt, the darling of women, the victorious seducer, has become Angelo Pratolini, informer and nark; the fingers that were once adorned with diamonds are now busied in writing sordid denunciations, in sprinkling ink and gall venomously to right and to left, until even Venice wearies of his complaints and expels him from its precincts.

Information is scanty as concerns Casanova's life during the next few years. Upon what gloomy seas did the

wreck drift until it was at length cast ashore in Bohemia? The elderly adventurer still wandered to and fro across Europe, making trial of his customary arts in the hope of extracting money from the rich and the noble—card-sharper, cabalist, and pimp, as of yore. Alas, the favouring gods of his youth, his impudence, his self-confidence, had abandoned him; women laughed at his wrinkled face, and he was hard put to it to get a living. He became secretary (probably a euphemism for spy) at the embassy in Vienna; and there is evidence of expulsion from a number of towns. In Vienna, at long last, he designed to marry a street-walker, that the earnings of her sorry but lucrative trade might provide him with the wherewithal to live; this excellent scheme came to nothing. At length Count Waldstein, a man fabulously rich, with a taste for the occult, came across Casanova in Paris, and took pity on him, charmed by the derelict's cynical volubility. He invited the adventurer to Dux as librarian, which meant court jester. Waldstein bought Casanova as he would have bought any other curio, paying for this one a thousand gulden a year—a salary which was always pledged in advance to Casanova's creditors. At Dux the old man lived, or rather died, for thirteen years.

After a long period of obscurity, he once more becomes plainly visible. He is Casanova again, or at any rate something which vaguely reminds us of Casanova. He is Casanova's mummy, a withered vestige, pickled in his own gall, a strange specimen which the count shows to guests. They look upon him as an extinct crater, entertaining, no longer dangerous, lively and amusing after the southland fashion, but slowly perishing of boredom in this Bohemian eyrie. Yet for the last time Casanova

fools the world. While all think him utterly outworn, dead to life and a candidate for the cemetery, he makes a new life for himself out of his memories, and, in a supreme venture, ensurès for himself immortality.

LIKENESS OF CASANOVA IN OLD AGE

Altera nunc rerum facies, me quaero, nec adsum,
Non sum, qui fueram, non putor esse: fui.

INSCRIPTION BENEATH CASANOVA'S PORTRAIT AT THE AGE OF SIXTY-THREE

We are in the years 1797 and 1798. The bloodstained besom of the revolution has been sweeping up the debris of the gallant century; the heads of His Most Christian Majesty and of Queen Marie Antoinette have fallen into the basket of the guillotine; and now a little general from Corsica has made short work of dozens of petty princes, the Venetian inquisitors not excepted. Nobody is reading the Encyclopædia any longer, or the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau, for interest is concentrated upon the bulletins from the seat of war. Europe is a sober place; carnival days are over, and with them have vanished rococo, hooped petticoats, powdered wigs, silver shoe-buckles, and Brussels lace. Velvet coats are out of fashion; everyone who is not in uniform wears plain cloth. But here is a strange figure, an old fellow rusticating in an out-of-the-way corner of Bohemia, who seems to have taken no note of the passing of time. Like Herr Ritter Gluck in Hoffman's tale, he is decked out in all the colours of the rainbow, velvet waistcoat with gold buttons, neckcloth of worn and yellow lace, clocked stock-

ings, flowered garters, and white-plumed hat. In this rig, he leaves Castle Dux and makes his way over the cobblestones into the town. He still wears a wig, carelessly powdered it is true (for he no longer has a servant), and he leans on a goldheaded cane such as might have been seen in the Palais Royal more than half a century before. Yes, it is really Casanova, or rather his mummy; he is still alive, despite poverty, manifold vexations, and syphilis. His skin is like parchment; his great hooked nose projects formidably over his thin-lipped, slavering mouth; his bushy brows are white; he exhales a stuffy aroma, as of dried gall and book-dust. But his eyes, black as pitch, have the old restless gleam, peering angrily from beneath the half-closed lids. Their expression is not a pleasant one, for he has been a peevish fellow ever since fortune cast him on to this Bohemian dung-hill. He vouchsafes scarcely a glance at the stupid townsfolk; they are hardly worth a civil greeting, these clownish fellows who have never been outside their native village. "What is there in common between them and myself, the Chevalier de Seingalt, who once fired a bullet into the august body of the court chamberlain of Poland, and who received the golden spurs from the pope's own hands?" Sad to relate, even the women do not respect him. They hold their hands in front of their mouths, to keep themselves from laughing at him openly. Still, it is better to walk abroad among these common folk than to sit at home among those blackguards of servants, "the blockheads whose kicks I have to endure"; Feltkirchner worst of all, the steward, and Widerholt, his tool. What brutes they are! On purpose, yesterday, they emptied the saltcellar into the soup, and burned the macaroni; they tore his portrait out of his Icosameron, and hung it up in the

privy; they actually dared to whip the little bitch Melampyge which countess Roggendorf had given him, simply because the poor beast had misbehaved in one of the rooms. Oh for the good old days when one would have put such unruly servants in the stocks, or have been able to order them a sound flogging, instead of having to endure their insolence. But to-day, thanks to Robespierre, the canaille has the upper hand, the Jacobins have ruined everything, and he himself is nothing more than a poor old dog whose teeth are worn out. Well, well, what's the use of grumbling; he had better go back to his room and read Horace.

To-day his troubles are forgotten for the nonce, and the old mummy is bustling about in fine fettle. He has put on his threadbare court dress, and is wearing all his orders, for the count has personally informed him that his grace of Teplitz is coming, accompanied by the Prince de Ligne and other noblemen. They will talk French at table, and the envious pack of servants will have to stand behind his chair and treat him as one of the distinguished company, to hand him his food properly, instead of throwing it to him as one throws a bone to a dog. Yes, he will sit down to dinner at the big table among the Austrian noblemen, who know how to value sprightly conversation, how to listen to a philosopher whom even Voltaire respected, one who in former days was a welcome guest at the table of emperors and kings. Perhaps after the ladies have withdrawn, Count Waldstein and the Prince de Ligne will ask him to read a chapter from his interesting memoirs. He will probably comply—probably, not certainly, for he is not Count Waldstein's servant, and compelled to obey orders; he is a guest, a librarian, an equal. Anyhow, he will tell them one or two

good stories, in the style of his sometime teacher, Monsieur Crébillon; or one or two spicy tales of the Venetian sort. "We shall all be noblemen together, and shall understand the finer shades. We shall laugh merrily over our wine, a dark and heavy burgundy like that drunk at the court of His Most Christian Majesty; shall converse about war, alchemy, and books; and an elderly philosopher will certainly be able to impart a little of his wisdom concerning the world and women."

Greatly excited, he hobbles through the suite of rooms, looking like a withered and malicious bird, his eyes sparkling with arrogance and spite. He polishes up the spurious gems in the cross he is going to wear (the genuine stones have gone to the Jews long since); standing in front of the mirror, he practises bowing after the manner of the court of Louis XV. It is a pity that he has grown stiff, that his back creaks when he tries to bend it, but what can you expect when one has been driving in postchaises over the length and breadth of Europe for seventy years, and when the women have drained away one's sap? Still, the wits have not all run out of his brain-box; he will know how to make a good showing and to amuse the company. In the best handwriting he can achieve—it is rather tremulous, but still beautifully legible—he copies out on a piece of handmade paper a poem in the French tongue, a poem of welcome to the Princesse de Recke; and he paints a pompous dedication on the front of his new comedy for the amateur stage. Even while vegetating here in Dux, he has not forgotten the proprieties, and, as a gentleman, he knows how to greet an assembly of persons interested in literature.

Nor is he disappointed when the carriages drive up to the door, and, on his gouty feet, he stumps down the

steps to welcome the newcomers. While Count Waldstein and the guests toss their headgear and their cloaks to the servants, they embrace Casanova as a member of their own order, and to those who have not met him before he is presented as the famous Chevalier de Seingalt. There is talk of his literary merits, and the ladies vie with one another to have him sitting beside them at table. Even before the dishes have been cleared away, everything happens as he had foreseen. The Prince de Ligne asks how he is getting on with that extraordinarily interesting account of his life; and thereupon, with one voice, the ladies and gentlemen beg him to read them a chapter from the book. How can he refuse to comply with any wish of his benefactor, Count Waldstein? Casanova trots upstairs to his room, and from among the fifteen manuscript folios he selects the volume in which the marker lies. This contains the show piece, one of the few chapters it is safe to read in mixed company, the account of his escape from the Leads in Venice. He has related this incomparable adventure so often: to the Elector of Bavaria, to the Elector of Cologne, to men of high rank in England and in Poland. He will show them that a Casanova can write more spiritedly than that heavy Prussian Herr von Trenck, about whose escape from prison so much fuss has been made. Recently Casanova has introduced some fine new turns of phrase, has dwelt upon some remarkable complications, and has finished up with a most effective quotation from the divine Dante. The reading is a great success. There are salvos of applause; the count embraces him, and as he does so slips a rouleau of ducats into the old fellow's pocket. Well, Casanova can find a use for them! Though the world in general may have forgotten him, his creditors are well informed

as to his whereabouts! But he is sincerely touched by these attentions, and the tears actually course down his cheeks when the princess congratulates him in kindly words, and when all drink to the speedy completion of his masterpiece.

Next day, alas, the horses have been put to and are pawing the ground impatiently in the courtyard. The noble company is about to start for Prague, and, although the librarian has hinted more than once that he has urgent business in that city, no one offers him a lift. He must stay behind in the huge, cold, draughty castle, exposed to the insolence of the rabble of servants, who are ready to grin contemptuously at Casanova the instant Count Waldstein's back is turned. He is left alone among barbarians, not one of whom can speak French or Italian, not one of whom can converse about Ariosto and Jean-Jacques. He cannot spend all his time writing letters to the dry-as-dust Herr Opitz, in Czaslau, and to the small number of good-natured ladies who still keep up a correspondence with him. The spirit of boredom has once more taken possession of these uninhabited rooms, and the gout, which he had managed to forget yesterday, has returned in full force to-day. Grumpily Casanova takes off his court dress, and dons his thick Turkish dressing-gown; splenetically he sidles off to his last refuge, to his memories, to his writing-table. Carefully mended quills are waiting for him beside the blank folios on which he is to write. He sets himself to his task once more, and posterity may bless the tedium which induces him to write the story of his life.

For behind this death's-head countenance, behind this parchmenty skin, a vigorous memory has been preserved in excellent condition, like the flesh of a nut inside a hard

and wrinkled shell. All remains in good order within the brain-box betwixt forehead and occiput. The sparkling eyes, the eager nostrils, the clutching hands, the gouty fingers—his memory retains all that they have seen, all that they have handled, in a thousand adventures; can recall every detail of the smooth feminine bodies which the fingers had once so ardently caressed. Now the fingers set themselves to writing of these things for thirteen hours at a stretch ("thirteen hours which pass in a flash as if they had been thirteen minutes"). Lying on the table is a medley of the faded letters from his sometime mistresses, mementos, locks of hair, all kinds of relics; and just as a silvery smoke will still rise above the embers when the flames are quenched, so an invisible cloud of delicate aroma hovers over the ancient memorials. Every embrace, every kiss, every surrender, is called up to play its part in the phantasmagoria; and this conjuration of the past is not work but play, "Le plaisir de se souvenir ces plaisirs." The old man's eyes shine brightly; his lips twitch in his excitement; he mutters to himself as he reshapes dialogues, involuntarily mimicking his inamoratas' voices, and laughing as he retells his own jests. He forgets to eat and to drink; forgets his poverty, his lowly situation, and his impotence; forgets the sorrows and ignominies of his old age. In this dream life, he has grown young once again; Henriette, Babette, and Thérèse, the shades he has summoned from the dead, are smiling on him again, and perhaps he enjoys their necromantic presence even more than he enjoyed them in the flesh. He writes and writes, an adventurer with the pen as aforetime he was an adventurer with his whole ardent body; he paces up and down the room, reading over to himself what he has written, laughing heartily, self-forgetful.

His enemies the servants have gathered round the door, wonderingly, eavesdropping. They grin at one another, and say: "To whom is he chattering, with whom is he laughing, the old fool?" Tapping their foreheads significantly, they clatter downstairs again to their wine, and leave Casanova to himself in his garret. The outer world has forgotten him. The angry old eagle, alone in his eyrie at Dux, might almost as well be living on the top of an iceberg. When at length, at the end of June, 1798, his tired heart has ceased to beat, and the poor, withered frame which had once been so ardently embraced by a thousand women is committed to the tomb, the church register cannot even get his name right. "Casaneus, Venetian, 84 years of age," is the entry; wrong name, wrong age, so little do those among whom he has lived for years, and among whom he has now died, know of him. No one troubles to erect a monument, and no one pays any heed to his manuscripts. While the body moulders in an unnamed grave, the letters crumble, and even thievish hands are not interested enough to open or to steal the folio volumes of his memoirs. From 1798 to 1822, for a quarter of a century, no one could have seemed more hopelessly dead than this most living of all the men that ever lived.

GENIUS FOR SELF-PORTRAITURE

Courage is the one thing needful.
PREFACE TO THE MEMOIRS

His life had been adventurous, and his resurrection was to be the same. On December 13, 1820 (who, at that date, remembered Casanova?) the famous publishing firm of Brockhaus received a letter from an unknown correspondent named Gentzel, inquiring whether the *Histoire de ma vie jusqu'à l'an 1797* by a certain Signor Casanova would be acceptable for publication. Brockhaus asked Gentzel to send along the folios, and secured an expert opinion on them. You may imagine that they created a sensation! The manuscript was instantly purchased, was translated into German, abominably mutilated one may presume, plastered over with fig-leaves, and adjusted for public consumption. By the time the fourth volume appeared, the success had been so tremendous that a Parisian pirate retranslated the German translation into French, the work being thus mauled a second time. Thereupon Brockhaus, with an eye to his own profits, shot a second French retranslation after the first. In a word, Giacomo, the rejuvenated, had come to life again. He now enjoys a vigorous reincarnation in all the towns he ever visited—but his original manuscript is solemnly entombed in Herr Brockhaus' safe, and only God and Brockhaus know through what devious and thievish paths the volumes wandered during their three-and-twenty years of incognito, or how much of their precious con-

tents has been lost, mutilated, castrated, falsified. In the genuine Casanova style, the whole affair reeks of mystery, adventure, dishonesty. Still, all these drawbacks notwithstanding, we can congratulate ourselves on the miracle of possessing the most impudent and racy picaresque romance of all ages!

Casanova himself had never seriously believed in the public appearance of this monster. "For seven years I have been doing nothing else than write my memoirs," confesses the gouty old hermit on one occasion, "and it has gradually become a necessity for me to carry the matter through to an end, although I greatly regret having undertaken it. But I write in the hope that my history will never see the light. Apart from the fact that the censorship, that extinguisher of the intellect, would never allow it to be printed, I look forward to being rational enough in my last illness to have all the manuscript burnt before my eyes." Fortunately he remained true to himself, and therefore never became "rational." What he once spoke of as his capacity for "secondary blushing," for blushing at his inability to blush, did not prevent his taking up his pen, and, in his fair, round hand, writing folio after folio for twelve hours a day. He said of this occupation: "It was the only way in which I could hinder myself from becoming crazy, or from dying of the spleen —of vexation on account of the disagreeables and annoyances I had to suffer daily at the hands of the envious brutes who lived under the same roof with me in Count Waldstein's castle."

As fly-flapper to ward off boredom, a remedy against intellectual ossification—surely this is a strange motive, the objector will exclaim, for the writing of one's memoirs. But it would be a mistake to underrate the impor-

tance of tedium as an incentive to literary creation. We have to thank the weary years spent in prison by Cervantes for the boon of Don Quixote; the best pages written by Stendhal were penned during his exile in the marshes of Civita Vecchia; even Dante's *Divine Comedy* might never have come into being but for the author's banishment, for had he stayed in Florence he would have written in blood with sword and battle-ax instead of committing his thoughts to rhyme. The most brightly-coloured pictures of life can only be fashioned in a camera obscura. Had Count Waldstein taken the worthy Giacomo with him to Paris or to Vienna, fed him there on the fat of the land and allowed him to smell the flesh of women, had he been fêted as a wit in all the drawing-rooms, these wonderful narratives would never have got beyond the stage of talk over chocolate and sherbet, would never have achieved permanent incorporation in black and white. Like Ovid beside the shores of the Euxine, the old fellow sat alone and shivering in his Bohemian exile, and there told his story like one looking back on life out of the realm of the shades. His friends were dead, his adventures had been forgotten, his senses had ceased to glow. A neglected ghost, he wandered through the chilly rooms of the castle. No woman came to visit him; no one had any respect for him; no one wanted to hear him talk. The venerable sorcerer, therefore, wishing to prove, to himself at least, that he was still alive, or at any rate had lived ("vixi, ergo sum"), exerted his cabalistic arts once more to conjure up the past, recounted for his present enjoyment the enjoyments of days long dead. Hungry men lacking money to buy food must feast upon the odour of roast meat; victims on the field of war and the field of Venus must content themselves as

best they may with telling the story of their adventures. "I renew the pleasure by reminding myself of it, and I can laugh at past distresses since I can no longer feel their smart."

Casanova's sole purpose in operating this peepshow, this old man's toy, is to please himself; he wants his vivid memories to distract his attention from the dull present. It is this negative element of absolute aloofness and unconcern which gives his work its peculiar psychological value as self-portraiture. Generally speaking, when anyone tells the story of his own life, he does it purposively, and somewhat theatrically. He puts himself on a stage, is aware of the audience, unconsciously adopts some particular attitude, poses as an interesting character, calculates the effects of every gesture. Benjamin Franklin writes his autobiography as a work of edification; Bismarck, as a historical document; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to make a sensation; Goethe, as a work of art and an imaginative exercise; Napoleon on St. Helena, as a justification and as a monument. They all expect the work of self-portraiture to have a specific influence in the moral, historical, or literary field and for every one of them this conviction imposes a burden or exercises a restraint in the form of a sense of responsibility. Famous men are never free from fears and scruples when writing autobiography, for they know that their self-portrait will be confronted with a portrait that already exists in the imaginations or experiences of countless fellow-men. Willy-nilly, therefore, they are compelled to adapt the autobiography to the preformed legend. Being famous, for the sake of their fame they are constrained to have regard to their country, their children, morality, honour. Instinctively they watch the image of their personality

that has shaped itself in the minds of their contemporaries; and one who already belongs to the public is bound by many ties.

Casanova, on the other hand, can enjoy the luxury of absolute freedom from restrictions, and can indulge in the impudence of anonymity. He is under obligations to no one, has no ties, either to the past, which has forgotten him, or to the future, in which he does not believe. He is not troubled by any considerations for family feeling, by any thought of morality, by any circumstantial hindrances. His children, if he has any, have been hatched out of cuckoos' eggs laid in strange nests. The women who gave themselves to him in the days of his youth have been mouldering long since in Italian, Spanish, English, or German earth. He has no fatherland, no home, no religion. Whose feelings need he consider? What he has to tell can no longer advantage him in any way; nor can it harm him, since for practical purposes he is a dead man, is beyond good and evil, beyond respect and contempt, beyond approval and disapproval, expunged from men's memories, a dead star, or one which glows only in its hidden core. "Why should I not tell the truth? A man cannot deceive himself, and I am writing for myself alone."

But when Casanova speaks of telling the truth, he does not imply a determination to drive mine-shafts into his own interior, to disclose psychological depths. He means no more than that he will have no inhibitions, no shame. He will strip off his clothes, and, comfortably naked, will warm his body once again in the stream of sensuality, will splash cheerfully in the current of memories, taking no heed of the presence of actual or imaginary spectators. He does not recount his adventures like

a literary man, a soldier, or a poet, like one who talks for his own honour and glory; he writes in the spirit in which a bravo vaunts the murders he has committed, or a poor old harlot tells of her hours of love—with no thought of shame. "Non erubesco evangelium," I do not blush at my confessions, such is the motto written underneath his "Précis de ma vie," the first draft of his memoirs. He tells his story simply and directly. Thus while he may seem coarse at times, writing as frankly as Lucian, and (like a vain athlete showing off his muscle) making too public a display of his phallic activities—assuredly this shameless parade is far more to our taste than the cowardly furtiveness of a weak-loined galanterie in eroticis. Look, for contrast, at the other erotic treatises of his day; at the rose-tinted, musk-smelling frivolities of a Grécourt, a Crébillon, or at Louvet de Couvray's *Faublas*, in which Eros is draped as a shepherd-boy and love is displayed as a lascivious chassé-croisé, a gallant amusement, in which one neither procreates children nor catches syphilis. In Casanova's memoirs we have nothing of this sort; we have precise descriptions of the wholesome and exuberant joys of a vigorous man of the senses, whose elemental virility and elemental naturalness we can fully appreciate. In Casanova, masculine love is not depicted as a delicate, gently flowing rivulet in which sportive nymphs can cool their feet; but as a mighty river, reflecting the world in its surface, and at the same time sweeping along in its depths all the slime and foulness of existence. Assuredly no other autobiographer can rival him in his limning of the Pan-like intensity of the male sexual impulse. At length we find someone with courage enough to disclose the intermingling of flesh and spirit in masculine love; with courage enough to describe, not

only sentimental amourettes, but also the adventures of the brothel, stark-naked and skin-deep sexuality; the whole labyrinth of sex, through which every real man threads his way.

Not that the other great autobiographies, like those of Goethe or Rousseau, are positively unveracious. But there is a falsehood that finds expression in telling only half the tale, and there is a falsehood that takes the form of concealment. Now both Goethe and Rousseau (like all autobiographers, with the possible exception of the bold Hans Jaeger) are careful (deliberately or forgetfully) to avoid saying a word about the less appetizing, the purely sexual episodes of their amatory life. They dwell exclusively upon spiritualized, sentimentalized love affairs with Claras and Gretchens. They tell us only of those women who, mentally as well as physically, are reasonably clean, are persons with whom they would not be ashamed to walk arm-in-arm down Main Street. The other women with whom our autobiographers have had carnal relations are kept carefully out of the way in dark alleys and in two-pair backs. Thus, unconsciously of course, these writers falsify the picture of masculine eroticism. Goethe, Tolstoy, even Stendhal who in other respects is no prude, having uneasy consciences, skate swiftly over the thin ice. They tell us nothing of their numerous encounters with Venus Vulgivaga, the earthly, all-too-earthly love. Were it not for the splendidly shameless Casanova, who boldly draws back all the curtains and lets us look freely into his inner rooms, world literature would lack a thoroughly plain and straightforward account of the complexities of masculine sexuality. In Casanova we are shown the whole sexual mechanism of the senses at work; we are shown the world

of the flesh even in its miry and marshy parts; we are allowed to glimpse its abysses. This idler, adventurer, cardsharper, rogue, shows more straightforwardness than the greatest of our writers, for he presents the world as a conglomerate of beauty and ugliness, of refined spirit and gross sexuality; and he does not pretend that it is nothing more than an idealized, chemically purified entity. In sexual matters, Casanova does not merely tell the truth, but (how immense is the difference) the whole truth. His love world is true to reality.

Casanova true? I hear the academicians stirring indignantly in their chairs. For the last fifty years they have been directing a machine-gun fire at his historical blunders, and they have caught him out in many an outrageous falsehood. Gently, brothers, gently! No doubt Casanova was an accomplished cardsharper, was a habitual liar, was a professor of rodomontade. In his memoirs he arranges his cards here and there, "il corrige la fortune," being an irreclaimable swindler, with a taste for giving lame chance a leg-up. He adorns, garnishes, peppers, spices his aphrodisiac ragout, mingling therein all the ingredients of an imagination inflamed by abstinence. Often he does this automatically, without being aware of it. We must remember that in course of time embellishments and even falsehoods are justified by memory, so that in the end a genuine fabulist can no longer be certain what parts of his story are fact and what fiction. Casanova, be it remembered, was a rhapsodist. He paid for his invitations to dine at great men's tables by being a good conversationalist, by recounting strange adventures. Just as court singers of old intensified interest by interweaving new and ever new episodes into their lays, so was he constrained to put a fresh romantic gloss upon

successive recitals of his adventures. For instance, every time he had to retell the story of his escape from the Leads it was expedient to heighten the interest by a further exaggeration of the risks, and he thus continually found himself at a greater remove from the actual facts. He, poor fellow, could never have anticipated that more than a century after his death the members of a sort of historical Casanova Police Force would be busily engaged in combing through a mass of documents, letters, archives, in order to check every detail in his memoirs, and in order, with the ruler of science, to rap him on the knuckles for every mistake in a date.

No doubt his dates are not altogether reliable. As for his anecdotes, quite a number of them, when closely examined, collapse like a house of cards. For instance, it has been proved to-day, almost beyond doubt, that the romantic adventures in Constantinople were nothing more than a voluptuous dream of the old gentleman at Dux, and that he had quite gratuitously introduced poor Cardinal de Bernis as lover and voyeur into the story of his liaison with the pretty nun M. M. He reports meetings in Paris and London with persons who are positively known to have been elsewhere at the time; he gives a date ten years too early for the death of the Marchioness of Urfé, because her presence on the stage had become inconvenient to him; in a single hour, when plunged in thought, he walks from Zurich to Kloster Einsiedeln—thus covering a distance of thirty-one kilometres with the speed of a modern motor-car. Certainly you must not expect to find in him a fanatical zeal for truth in matters of detail, you must not consult him as a trustworthy historian. The more we scrutinize Casanova's statements in these little matters, the more frequent and the more

flagrant are the minor errors we discover. But all these petty falsifications, chronological mistakes, mystifications, and vapourings, these arbitrary and often extremely natural errors of omission, count for nothing as compared with the uncompromising and positively unique veracity of the autobiography as a whole. No doubt Casanova has made free use of the artist's incontestable right to compress space and time in order to make incidents more picturesquely intelligible; but nothing of this sort affects the straightforward, frank, and luminous way in which he contemplates his life and his epoch as a whole. It is not Casanova alone, but the century to which he belongs, that are staged vividly before us. In dramatic episodes, electrifying in their contrasts, he exhibits all strata of society, of nations, of scenes, and paints for us a picture of eighteenth century morals and immorals unrivalled in literature.

At first sight you may regard it as a defect that he does not plumb the depths; and that he does not, like Stendhal or Goethe, view things from a height whence he can secure a general intellectual view of national peculiarities. But for the very reason that his outlook is a superficial one, that he stands within the ambit of the events he describes, looking inquisitively to right and to left of him, his method of contemplation makes his account so valuable a document to the historian of civilization. Certainly, Casanova does not disclose the conceptual roots of the life amid which he lives, and is therefore unable to explain the totality of the phenomena he describes. He is content to leave everything as he finds it, higgledy-piggledy, the sport of chance, without any attempt to assort, to crystallize. For him everything is equally important, so long as it amuses him—that was the only

standard by which he and his associates judged. He knows neither large nor small in the world of thought or in the world of things; has no knowledge of good and evil. That is why he describes his conversation with Frederick the Great in exactly the same tone, and with exactly the same amount of detail, as, ten pages earlier, he has described a conversation with a harlot; that is why he has, and expects you to have, just as much interest in a Paris brothel as in Empress Catherine's Winter Palace. How many hundred ducats he has won at faro, or how many times in a single night he was able to prove his virility with Dubois or with Hélène, is no less momentous to Casanova than are the details of his talk with Monsieur de Voltaire. For him nothing in the world has any moral or æsthetic significance, and therefore he remains perfectly natural, perfectly at his ease, whatever he is telling us. If Casanova's memoirs, intellectually considered, may seem no more than a commonplace story of travel through the interesting landscapes of life, this is as much as to say that there is no philosophy in them; but their very lack in this respect has made of them a historical Baedeker, an eighteenth century *Cortigiano*, and an amusing "chronique scandaleuse," a most effective cross-section from the everyday life of a century.

It is thanks to Casanova, in large measure, that we know so much of the daily life of the eighteenth century; of its balls, its theatres, coffee houses, festivals, inns, dining halls, brothels, hunting parties, monasteries, nunneries, and fortresses. Thanks to him we know how people travelled, fed, gamed, danced, lived, loved, amused themselves; we know their manners and customs, their ways of speech. Superadded to this abundance of facts, to this wealth of practical details, we have a tumultuous

assembly of human personalities, enough to fill twenty novels and to supply ten generations of novelists. Look at them: soldiers and princes, popes and kings, cheats and cardsharpers, merchants and lawyers, castrati, souteneurs, women of all sorts and stations, authors and philosophers, the wise and the foolish—assuredly it is the best-stocked menagerie of human beings that any one writer has ever packed into the enclosure of a single book. None the less, each of the figures on his canvas has an unexplored interior. Casanova once said, writing to Opitz, that he lacked a talent for psychology, that he could not "discern inner physiognomies." We need not be surprised, therefore, that countless imaginative writers of later generations have drawn their must from this southland vineyard. Hundreds of novels and plays owe to Casanova their best characters and their most likely situations. Nor is the quarry exhausted. Just as ten generations have taken from the Forum stone for new buildings, so for generations yet to come will writers borrow material from this arch-spendthrift.

But the supreme character in his book—never to be forgotten, and already within a century become proverbial —is Casanova himself, that strange cross between Renaissance adventurer and modern swell-mobsman, that amazing creature who was rascal and genius rolled into one. People will never cease to take delight in the study of his personality. As challengingly erect as the bronze equestrian statue of his fellow-Venetian Colleoni, he stands sturdily planted in the midst of life, looking down through the centuries, indifferent to mockery or blame. Shamelessly he has displayed himself to the world, so that we know better than we know our own brothers this titanic, unwearied fragment of mankind. We should waste

our time were we to look for psychological depths, to seek backgrounds and hidden abysses; Casanova has nothing of the kind to reveal. There is no rouge on his face, and he is unbuttoned down to the cod-piece of his breeches. Without ceremony, without restraint, without ambiguity, he takes the reader comfortably by the arm, reveals all his privacies, whether of bed or board, whether of gaming table or alchemist's hocus-pocus. He laughingly displays himself in the most delicate situations, and he does so, not in an exhibitionist spirit, not under stress of a morbid Candaules perversion, but naïvely, with the inborn and bewitching grace of a child of nature, who has been in paradise, has seen there the naked Eve, and has not eaten of the apple which brings a knowledge of good and evil.

Here, as always, simplicity, ingenuousness, explains the perfection with which he tells his tale. The most skilful psychologist, the most practised writer, cannot make of Casanova a more live figure than he makes of himself in virtue of his absolute, unreflecting nonchalance. He stands before our eyes in all sorts of situations. We see him in anger, when his face flushes, when his white teeth are clenched, when his mouth is bitter as gall; we see him in danger, bold, alert, smiling contemptuously, with a steady hand on the hilt of his sword. We see him in good society; vain, boastful, self-possessed, talking easily, voluptuously appraising the charms of women. Whether as a handsome stripling or as a toothless ruin, he is always vividly presented to us. When we read his memoirs, we feel as if he were actually before us; and we are sure that if this man, dead long since, were to come suddenly round the corner, we should recognize him in a moment—though we know him only through a self-portrait limned by one who was neither a professional author nor a psy-

chologist. Goethe's Werther, Kleist's Kohlhaas, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Saint-Preux and Héloïse—not one of the figures made real to us by these great writers is so real as the self-portrayed Casanova.

It is of no use, therefore, to turn up your nose at his equivocal talent, or to put on moral airs because of his scapegrace behaviour, or to hold him to account for his banalities and ignorant plagiarisms in matters philosophical. Despite all you can do, despite all the objections you can raise, Giacomo Casanova has taken his place in world literature, beside the gallows-bird Villon, and various other rogues, who will outlive countless thoroughly reputable authors and critics. As when he was alive, so after his death, he has reduced to absurdity all the accepted laws of æsthetics, and has thrown the moral catechism into the waste-paper basket. The growth and the persistence of his reputation show that a man need not be especially gifted, industrious, well-behaved, noble-minded, and sublime, in order to make his way into the temple of literary immortality. Casanova has proved that one may write the most amusing story in the world without being a novelist, and may give the most admirable picture of the time without being a historian; for in the last resort we judge these matters, not by the method but by the effect, not by the morality but by the power. Any thoroughly adequate feeling may be productive, shamelessness just as much as shame, characterlessness just as much as character, evil just as much as good, morality just as much as immorality. What decides whether a man will become immortal, is not his character but his vitality. Nothing save intensity confers immortality. A man manifests himself more vividly, in proportion as he is strong and uni-

fied, effective and unique. Immortality knows nothing of morality or immorality, of good or evil; it measures only work and strength; it demands from a man not purity but unity. Here, morality is nothing; intensity, all.

Qu'ai-je été? Que suis-je? Je serais
bien embarrassé de le dire.
STENDHAL: VIE DE HENRI BRULARD

Stendhal

1783–1842

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LOVE OF FALSEHOOD AND DELIGHT IN TRUTH

I should much prefer to wear a mask and to change my name.

FROM A LETTER

Few have lied more arrantly or quizzed the world with greater delight than Stendhal; few have told the truth to better advantage or with more profundity than he.

His subterfuges and mystifications are legion. When we take up one of his books, we are faced with a riddle before ever we open it, and after reading the preface we are still puzzled, for the author never gives his name simply and straightforwardly as Henri Beyle. At one moment he arbitrarily assumes a title of nobility, at another he becomes "César Bombet," or he adds the enigmatic letters A. A. to his initials, leaving the reader to find out for himself that they represent the words "ancien auditeur." He can feel at ease only under the cloak of a pseudonym. We meet him at times as "an Austrian pensioner," or, again, as "un ancien officier de cavalerie." But his favourite guise, the one that has most perplexed his fellow countrymen, is Stendhal. This is the name of an obscure village in Prussia which has thus obtained immortal renown through the whimsical humour of a Puckish wit. If he gives a date, we may be sure it is a wrong one. He tells us in the foreword to *La Chartreuse de Parme* that the novel was written "during the winter of

1830, three hundred leagues from Paris." This quip will not alter the fact that the said work was actually penned during the year 1839 in the very heart of the capital. Even actual facts are distorted. For instance, in his autobiography he solemnly assures us that he was present on the battlefields of Wagram, Aspern, and Eylau. There is not a word of truth in the statement! His diary informs us that at the time when these events were taking place he was sitting comfortably at home in Paris. He occasionally speaks of long and important conversations with Napoleon, only in the next volume to declare: "Napoleon was not wont to talk to fools of my genus."

Every utterance of Stendhal's must, therefore, be accepted with reserve; especially must we beware of his letters, for in these, presumably from fear of the police, he made use of varying aliases and was accustomed to falsify the date. He would send a letter from Rome, dating it from Orvieto; or, he would be spending the day in Grenoble, and pretend he was writing from Besançon. Often the year is given wrongly; nearly always the day of the month is incorrect; well-nigh invariably is the signature an assumed name. Diligent biographers have collected over two hundred such flights of fancy. Stendhal, whose authentic name was Beyle, signed his letters with such imaginary appellations as, Cottinet, Dominique, Don Flegme, Gaillard, A. L. Feburier, Baron Dormant, A. L. Champagne; or he would make use of the names of other writers, such as Lamartine and Jules Janin. His hoaxes were in reality the outcome of an innate delight in bewildering, in dumbfounding people, in disguising himself, in hiding himself. Stendhal assumes these kaleidoscopic changes in order to arouse interest in himself and to make his true personality invisible; he flashes his

rapier in masterly fashion in order to keep the inquisitive at bay; and he never attempts to conceal his passion for deception. A friend, in the course of a letter, once reproached Stendhal for having lied most abominably on a certain occasion. "True," wrote our author in the margin, his spirit unruffled by the accusation. Gaily, and with ironical pleasure, he falsifies the number of his years of civil service, he professes loyalty for the Bourbons at one moment and for Napoleon at another. In all his writings, whether published or unpublished, misstatements abound like spawn in a fishpond. His final lie, the one with which he bowed his adieux to the world, is recorded in the cemetery at Montmartre. Here we read on his tombstone: "Arrigio Beyle, Milanese." Yet he was really, much to his annoyance, born in Grenoble, and received in baptism the name of Henri! He wished to wear his mask to the end, to cloak himself in romantic trappings even at the approach of death.

In spite of all, however, few men have launched upon the world so many vital truths concerning their own personalities as did this past master in the art of dissembling. Stendhal was capable of telling the truth with the same alacrity that he displayed in telling lies. He has given us such intimate revelations concerning himself, has spoken with such amazing frankness as to the details of his inner life, that we are left speechless at his lack of reserve. On other occasions, however, just when he is on the verge of confiding some matter of interest, he suddenly draws a veil or fobs us off with a jest. Of his own free will, and with a profusion of circumstantial evidence, he discloses things which ordinary mortals would not admit even under torture. Stendhal was, in fact, as sturdy, nay as impudent, a truthteller as he was a liar. In one case as in

the other he ignores the conventional moral canons, and thrusts his way ruthlessly through all the barriers of the inner censorship. A man of a naturally shy disposition, timid in the presence of women, entrenching himself behind his aliases, as soon as he takes pen in hand he is full of courage. Vanished then are all inhibitions. Wherever, in his inner self, he encounters resistances, he collars them, drags them to the light of day, and dissects them with the utmost precision. The things which in the material world have proved to be the most inhibitive are mastered by him in the realm of psychology with the most thoroughgoing success. Thus, already in the year 1820, he intuitively opened some of the most intricately barricaded avenues to the soul, thereby anticipating, by a hundred years, the complicated and highly elaborated apparatus of psychoanalysis. Yet he possessed no more elaborate instrument than personal observation, and depended on no cut-and-dried theories for his intrepid raids into the land of the unconscious. He relied upon the hard and well pointed bistoury of inquisitiveness to lay bare what he wanted to know; and the most signal quality of his work was a bold statement of the truth without any regard for what the world would say.

Stendhal scrutinizes what he feels; his feelings are then exhibited frankly and unashamedly; the more daring they are, the better; the more intimate they are, the more passionately does he set them forth. He takes especial delight in exploring his most questionable feelings, those which have, through very shame, crept away into the dark recesses of his soul. How often he returns to the hatred he felt for his father! How fantastical are his references to the subject! He mockingly informs us that for a whole month he endeavoured, unavailingly, to

get up a feeling of sorrow at the news of the old man's death. The most painful avowals concerning his sex life, his persistent lack of success with women, the crises he underwent on account of his unbridled vanity, are all set out with the accuracy of an ordnance map. He communicates certain intimate happenings with a wealth of detail that reminds us of a clinical history; no one before him has ever allowed such confessions to pass the lips, or if an author should have permitted them to slip into his book they are ascribed to a printer's error. Stendhal's supreme merit lies in this, that through the transparent and egoistical coldness of his crystalline intelligence he has been able to transmit to future generations some of the rarest and most precious adventures of the soul. These experiences, preserved as it were in an ice-chamber, will endure for all time, a treasure of inestimable worth. Had this strange master of deception never lived, mankind would have known far less of the universe of the feelings and of their underworld.

The inconsistency in Stendhal's make-up can now be explained. It was essential that he should be a master craftsman in the art of deception, in the technique of falsehood, if he was to be successful in the art of telling the truth. He once declared that nothing had helped so greatly in his psychological development as the fact of his growing up in a thoroughly boring family circle which necessitated a constant life of deception from childhood upwards. For it is only when one has had personal experience of the ease with which a lie drops from one's lips, of the way in which feelings change with lightning speed as they rise from the heart and attain verbal expression, only when one has become an adept in the arts of quibble and fence, that one knows "how many

precautions are needed if one is not to lie." This disciplined mind has shown, after innumerable experiments within the confines of its own psychic world, how swiftly every feeling, immediately it realizes it is being observed, becomes shamefaced and beats a hurried retreat, so that, like a fisherman angling for trout, the experimenter must strike quickly and land the creature without delay if he is to make good his catch. Truth must be clutched and prisoned as soon as ever she pokes her nose round the corner. To seize upon such self-observations, to dissect them ere they can scuttle off into the subconscious or (through protective colouration) become merged into the background, such is the hobby of this practised and passionate seeker after knowledge. He is wise enough to realize that the chase holds very rare moments when fortune smiles on the hunter, that they are as scarce and as precious as the quarry itself. Strange as it may seem, few have had so persistent a respect for truth as Stendhal, the arch-liar. He knew that truth did not flaunt her charms at every crossroad, ready and willing to allow herself to be caressed by all who cared, rough-handed, to touch her. He, cunning as Odysseus, knew that truths dwell in caves, dread the daylight, scurry away at the first sound of a footfall, and slip from between the fingers of one who thinks to have got a firm hold. One needs to tread warily, to creep up softly, to be light of touch, to be tender of hand and of eye, to be practised in the art of seeing in the dark; above all one needs passion, passion which has been mentally schooled, which can soar on the wings of the spirit, which is endowed with a mania for listening and for tracking; one needs, as Stendhal says, to summon up all one's courage, to penetrate into the

minutest recesses of the labyrinthine plexus of the nerves, to find a way into the tenebrous crypts of the soul. Only thus can we hope to catch a whispered avowal; only thus may we perceive one facet of the everlastingly unattainable "truth" which coarse-grained men have endeavoured to immure in the mausoleums of their philosophical systems and to prison in the stifling cages of their theories. Stendhal, the would-be sceptic, looks upon truth as a gem of great price; he, in his wisdom, knows how elusive she is, how rare are her visits; above all, he realizes that she will not allow herself to be penned up like a domestic animal, to be sold and worn out like a beast of burden; he is well aware that knowledge comes only to those whose perceptions are fine.

Indeed, Stendhal deemed truth so precious that he never offered his truths for sale, never cried his wares. All he wanted was to be upright towards himself, and in his own despite. Hence his unscrupulous lying! This arch-egoist, this passionate investigator of his own motives and actions, never felt the slightest need to teach his contemporaries, and least of all to tell them about himself. On the contrary, he hedged his person about with a thorny thicket of spitefulness and malicious wit so that the crassly inquisitive might not come near, and he might be left in peace to pursue his way along the strangely deep galleries burrowing into his own depths. The greatest joke of his life was to mislead his neighbour; his most persistent passion was the passion to be honest with himself. Lies are short of leg and get left behind, so that they do not outcrawl the framework of their own generation; but the truths a man utters, once they are avowed and acknowledged, live on when he who launched them on the world

has long been dead. A man who has dealt uprightly with himself, were it but once in his lifetime, has been upright for ever. He who has disclosed the secrets of his soul has confessed them to the whole of mankind.

LIKENESS

Tu es laid, mais . . . tu as de la physiognomie.

UNCLE GAGNON TO YOUNG HENRI BEYLE

The attic in the Rue Richelieu is lighted by two wax candles, flickering in their holders on the writing-table. Stendhal has been at work on his novel since noon. Now he throws down his pen. Enough for to-day! A wash, a saunter, a good meal, pleasant company, women—by these he will be refreshed!

He makes his preparations, thrusts his arms into his coat, pushes back his wig. Now for a final glance in the mirror! He contemplates his own image, and promptly pulls a face which brings a sardonic fold to the corner of his mouth. No, he thinks, yours is not a handsome face! Such an unrefined, bulldog countenance, chubby, rubicund, fat and well-liking. Ah, how repulsively thick and nubbly his nose is as it lies amidships in this provincial face! The eyes? Not so bad; small, black, sparkling, filled with the restless light of curiosity. But they are too deep-set and are too small, compared with the heavy brows and the square-cut visage. Had he not been nicknamed "le Chinois" when he was serving his time in the army? Is there any redeeming feature? Stendhal angrily pursues his investigations. Not one! There is not a glimpse of tenderness, of spiritual vitality; every trait is heavy and commonplace, is massive and broad; a countenance

set in a framework of brown hair—and yet maybe this face is better than the body it surmounts. For the body is stunted, the neck thick and short—he would rather not look at it further. He hates his rotund belly, and the abbreviated legs that must carry the heavy mass of Henri Beyle's corpulence. He has never forgotten that his schoolfellows used to call him "the moving tower." Stendhal would fain seek some consolation as he gazes at himself in the unflattering glass. Ah, his hands! There, at least, is something he can be pleased with. Delicate as a woman's, the nails cut to a point and polished, they certainly betray a little intelligence and gentle birth. His skin, too, is of fine texture, smooth and lustrous as a girl's; surely it tells of noble susceptibilities? But who ever deigns to notice such details in a man? Women look to a man's face and figure—and, as far as he is concerned, he has known for fifty years now that his face and figure are hopelessly plebeian. Augustin Filon described his head as "une grosse tête de tapissier"; Monselet characterized him as "un diplomat avec un visage de droguiste." He feels that even such comparisons are too lenient, too friendly, and himself gives a verdict that is less flattering: "the face of an Italian butcher."

It would not be so bad, he muses, if this obese and massive body housed a virile and ruthless spirit. There are women who have no confidence in any but broad-shouldered men, who would rather trust themselves to a Cossack than to a dandy. Yet he knows that his rough and boorish exterior is only a decoy, a false bait. In this vast and fleshly tabernacle there is housed a being well-nigh morbid in its sensitiveness. Medical men have described Stendhal as "un monstre de sensibilité." How can so Ariel a spirit be caged within a Caliban's fleshly per-

sonality? Some wicked fairy must surely have played hanky-panky with his soul when he was lying in his cradle. The changeling spirit can never accommodate itself to its unseemly abode; it shudders and trembles at every provocation. An open window in the neighbouring room brings a shiver to the delicate skin; a door shut with a bang causes the nerves to start and quiver; an evil smell entails nausea and giddiness; a woman draws near, and immediately he is flurried, anxious, faint-hearted, or else (for these things sometimes act by contraries) he becomes unmannerly. What an incomprehensible mixture, forsooth! Why should he be afflicted with such mountains of flesh and fat and paunch, why should he be so broad and big-boned, when he was endowed with a spirit as fine as gossamer? Why must he be equipped with so dull, uninteresting, and coarse a tenement for his exquisitely responsive, intricate, and ethereal soul?

He turns away from the looking-glass. There is nothing to be done with such an exterior; Stendhal has been well aware of this ever since his youth. A veritable magician among tailors is helpless before such a figure. Press the flabby paunch up as much as you may, clothe the ridiculously abbreviated legs in the finest of Lyons silks, disguise the prematurely grey whiskers with a manly looking brown dye, set an elegant wig aloft to hide the bald and shiny pate, polish the nails and pare them to heart's content—nothing can help! Such things serve merely to furbish him up for a while, but no woman will trouble to turn her head at his passage or go into ecstasies over his appearance as Madame de Rénal does over her Julien or Madame de Chasteller over her Lucien Leuwen. Women take no notice of him. Even when he was a young man, a lieutenant, they ignored him; how can he expect

them to act differently now, when his soul has got stuck in a veritable bog of fat, and when age is graving wrinkles on his forehead? Good luck with the fair sex is impossible to the possessor of such a phiz. Yet what other happiness is there in this world?

One thing remains: to be nimble-witted, clever, interesting; to attract others by the play of intelligence; to divert attention from the body and the face by directing the observer's thoughts towards the inner man; to dazzle and seduce by surprise attacks and by eloquence. "Les talents peuvent consoler de l'absence de la beauté." If one has the misfortune to possess such a physique one must catch women by the display of mental faculties, must stimulate their curiosity, seeing that there is nothing to arouse their æsthetic sense. Thus one must play on the melancholy string with a sentimental woman, on the cynical string with a frivolous woman, and sometimes one has to strike up a completely different tune; one must for ever be on guard, for ever be witty and amusing. "Amusez une femme et vous l'aurez." Cunningly seize upon every weakness, make use of the least hint at boredom; pretend to be ardent when you are in reality cool and collected, or humbug your mistress with an assumption of unconcern when you are glowing with passion; bewilder her with abrupt changes of mood, and trick her into perplexity; always lead her to think that you are different from other men. Above all, never miss your opportunities, never be deterred by fancying you are making a mess of things. Women may forget a man's face! Did not Titania herself one moonlit night bestow her kisses on an ass?

Stendhal puts his hat on jauntily, takes his yellow gloves in hand, and glances once more in the mirror to

see if he has achieved the cold and mocking smile he wishes to affect. Yes, that is the expression he would like to take with him when he pays Madame de T. his respects this evening; an expression at once ironical, cynical, frivolous, and icy. It is always worth while trying to interest and astound a company with some sally or other which will shield his unhappy face from notice. Immediately upon entering the room he must bluff the guests, must conceal his inner trepidation by keeping up a continuous stream of braggadocio. As he goes downstairs he thinks out some apt phrase wherewith to make his entry. He will have himself announced as Monsieur le Marchand César Bombet; then he himself will appear as a talkative, bombastic woolstapler, never allowing anyone else to get in a word edgewise, talking of his business at such length, so brilliantly, with such impish insolence, that he will have the whole gathering in a ripple of laughter, and the ladies will have grown accustomed to his uncouth appearance. Follow this up with a running fire of anecdote, both broad and merry, calculated to titillate their senses; seek out a retired corner sufficiently dark to veil his physical deficiencies, quaff a couple of glasses of punch—then perhaps, perhaps, towards midnight, the ladies may declare him to be "quite charming!"

FILM OF HIS LIFE

Je serai célèbre vers 1880.

1799. The diligence from Grenoble to Paris halts at Nemours to change horses. Excited groups of people; placards on the walls; newspapers. Yesterday young General Bonaparte dealt the Republic the finishing stroke, kicked the Directory out of office, and proclaimed himself Consul. The travellers are agog, they enter into lively discussions; the only one who shows no interest is a sixteen-year-old youth, broadshouldered, rosy-cheeked. What cares he for Republic or Consulate? He is on his way to Paris, ostensibly to become a student at the Polytechnic, but in reality in order to be quit of his life in a provincial town. To live in Paris! Paris! Paris! The very sound of the name lets loose a flood of dream images. Paris means luxury, elegance, cheerfulness; in Paris one can soar as it were on wings, be high-spirited, antiprovincial, free; above all, Paris spells women, many women. Some woman, young, beautiful, tender, elegant, resembling Victorine Cably, the actress he had loved from afar in Grenoble, may come his way. He will get to know her in romantic circumstances, he will rescue her from a carriage accident by stopping the runaway horses. He will perform some great, heroic deed for her sake, and she will become his sweetheart.

The diligence lumbers on its way, unmercifully grinding these premature dreams under its wheels. The lad

has hardly a look to spare for the landscape, hardly a word to exchange with his travelling companions. This theoretical Don Juan has his mind full of fantastic adventures, romantic deeds, women, Paris. At length they pass the barrier, and the wheels thunder over cobbled streets, the coach threads its way along narrow, dirty alleys overshadowed by houses, reeking of stale food and rank with poverty. Horror seizes the stripling as he contemplates the city of his dreams. So this is Paris; "ce n'est donc que cela?" Henceforward the phrase will often drop from his lips: after his first duel; when the army crosses the Saint Bernard; the night of his first love experience. Reality will for ever disappoint this inveterate weaver of romance.

He is deposited in front of a dispassionate house in the rue Saint Dominique. Here, in an attic five flights up, in a small, dark room as exiguous as a prison cell, lighted by a tiny dormer window—indeed a forcing-house for melancholy—young Henri Beyle passes the first weeks. He does not open one of his books on mathematics the whole of that time. For hours on end, he roams the streets looking at women. What a source of temptation they are to be sure in their neo-Roman dresses, half naked; how alluringly they make merry with their beaux; how exquisite their laughter, so airy, so enticing! He dares not accost any of them. How should a clumsy, stupid youth, dressed in a green coat of provincial cut, with no pretensions to elegance, make advances to these charming creatures? He does not even venture to approach the gay girls who loaf round the street lamps ready to sell themselves to the first bidder; his heart aches with a sullen envy of other young scamps more audacious than he. He has never a friend to turn to; no society to amuse him;

no occupation. His humour is morose as he wanders about the grimy streets, dreaming of romantic adventures, so lost in his own thoughts that he is in constant risk of being run over.

At last, his spirit brought to heel by an intolerable yearning for the warmth, the intimacy, the conversation of fellow mortals, he goes to see his wealthy relatives, the Darus. They give him a hearty welcome, invite him to their beautiful house, make him feel at home. Alas, Henri Beyle cannot appreciate their kindness to the full, for do they not hail from the provinces? This, in his eyes, is "original sin"! They live in comfortable circumstances, while his own purse is empty; that is galling to him in the extreme. Listless, mumchance, gawky, he sits at table with these kindly folk, their secret enemy, hiding his poignant desire for tenderness behind a mask, sulky, ironical, mulish. Old Daru must look upon his youthful relative as an unpleasant and ungrateful guest. Later in the evening the family hero comes home from work, weary and taciturn. This is Pierre Daru. He is employed at the War Office, is becoming Bonaparte's right hand man, the only confidant of the mighty general's scheme of conquest. By temperament one would have thought the soldier would have had much in common with the budding author; yet, because the lad shut himself away behind a wall of silence, Pierre Daru looked upon Henri Beyle as a dullard. Was not young Daru making a translation of Horace into French verse, writing philosophical essays? Was he not destined, when his fighting days were over and he had laid aside his uniform, to add an *Histoire de Venise* to his credit? At the moment, however, he is immersed in the duties of his office, overshadowed by Bonaparte. All day long and far into the night, he la-

bours at Napoleon's side, writing letters at his master's dictation, drawing up plans, making calculations. Henri hates Pierre because the latter seeks to advance him in his career. This is precisely what Beyle does not want; he wishes to keep himself to himself.

One day Pierre Daru announces that he has secured a post for Beyle; the boy is to present himself at the War Office without delay. Now, under the lash of Daru's tongue, Henri Beyle plies his pen from ten o'clock in the forenoon to one o'clock at night, writing, writing, writing, letters, reports, dispatches, until his fingers seem palsied with fatigue. What can all this scribbling be for, he wonders. Soon, the whole world will know! Unwittingly he has his share in the preparations for the Italian campaign which begins with the battle of Marengo and is to end with the creation of the Napoleonic empire. At length the "Moniteur" lets the secret out of the bag; war is declared. Henri Beyle heaves a sigh of relief. Daru, his tormentor, will have to go to army headquarters. Over and done with, this endless and purposeless writing! War is far better than to have to tolerate the two things he most dreads in life: work and boredom.

May, 1800. Rearguard of the Army of Italy. Lausanne.

Two cavalry officers rein in their mounts and laugh so heartily that the plumes on their shakos are set aquivering. An absurd comedy is taking place before their eyes. Perched on the back of a restive mare, clinging to his seat as best he may, is a short-legged, chubby youth, dressed in a semi-civilian and semi-military costume. His bulging valise is strapped on to the saddle in front of him. He is hard put to it not to be thrown. His huge sabre, dangling askew from his middle, bangs against the

beast's flank as she curvets and prances about the road. At length, beside herself with irritation, she rears, and pitches her rider over hedge and ditch into the field beyond.

Royal entertainment, indeed! Then compassion takes hold of one of the onlookers. "Go and help the poor fellow," exclaims Captain Burelviller, sending his orderly to the rescue. The man gallops away, flogs the mare into submission, slips the reins over his arm, stoops to give the awkward rider a leg-up, and returns with his trophies to his master's side. Crimson with rage and mortification, the unhappy lad asks what the captain wants with him. Young Beyle, for it is he, the incurable romanticist, already has visions of arrest or of a duel. No sooner, however, does the captain learn that his interlocutor is a cousin of the mighty Daru, than his manner changes, he ceases guffawing over the joke and becomes serious and polite, begging Henri Beyle to give him the pleasure of his company for the remainder of the ride, and asking the recruit where he has been all this time. Henri flushes up again. How can he tell such a vulgarian that, with tears in his eyes, he has stood for hours before the house in Geneva where Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born? So he assumes a dashing, merry air, swaggers in so comical a manner, that he wins the hearts of his companions. The latter, thereupon, give him an elementary lesson in horsemanship, show him how to hold the reins, how to buckle on his sword at the correct angle; they let him in to the secrets of the profession. Instantly Henri Beyle recovers from his discomfiture; he feels he is a real soldier, a hero.

He feels he is a hero—or, let us say, he will not allow others to cast a doubt upon his courage. He would rather have his tongue cut out than betray himself by a

sigh of anxiety or by an untactful word. As the army defiles over the Saint Bernard pass, he turns to his friend the captain and asks disparagingly: "Is this all?" The question, savouring as it does of disappointment, is becoming habitual to him. At Fort Bard, he again plays the astonished. Here, the cannons are thundering: "Is this war? No more than this?" Still, he has smelt powder; he has, as it were, lost one kind of virginity. He spurs his steed forward towards Italy, where he is to lose the other kind, his eagerness for the eternal adventure of Eros stimulated by his nodding acquaintanceship with Mars.

MILAN, 1801. Corso at the Porta Orientale.

The war has delivered the women of Piedmont from captivity! Now they do not hesitate to drive unveiled and show their pretty faces to the French deliverers who throng the gay streets beneath the sunny skies. They pull up, in order to chat with their admirers or their cicisbei, smile at the saucy young officers with evident appreciation, and play a meaning game with fans and with flowers.

Pressing back into the shadows, a callow sub-lieutenant is devouring these fine ladies with ardent eyes. Yes, Henri Beyle has suddenly been promoted to the position of subaltern in the sixth dragoon regiment, although he has not yet been in a single battle. When one has a cousin like Pierre Daru one can arrive anywhere! His clanking sword, his big thigh-boots with their shining spurs, his smart uniform, have changed the short, thickset yokel of yesterday into a very martial figure indeed.

Instead of loafing about on the Corso, instead of strutting up and down dragging his sabre along the pavement and making sheep's-eyes at the women, he should be with his company which is engaged in pushing back the Aus-

trians behind the Mincio. But our worthy dragoon began young to detest doing the obvious; it had not taken him long to discover that "very little intelligence is needed to learn how to slash with a sabre." What's the use of being cousin to the mighty Daru if one cannot escape from military duties and enjoy the delights of Milan? In bivouac there are no lovely ladies; above all, this is no Scala, no godlike Scala with its operas by Cimarosa and its sublime singers. It is the Scala that Henri Beyle has chosen for his headquarters, not a tent somewhere in an Italian bog nor the Casa Bovara where the general staff carries on its business. Every evening he is the first arrival in the seats of the fifth-tier gallery. As the lights go up, he watches the ladies, "più che seminuda," come in; they are dressed in the most airy of silks, and uniformed men bend above their bare shoulders. How beautiful these Italian women are, to be sure! How merry, how attractive! And how grateful they are to Bonaparte for having brought so many fine young men to Italy—much to the disgust of the Milanese husbands!

As ill luck would have it none of these beauties had as yet thought of singling out Henri Beyle of Grenoble as a sweetheart. How was Angela Pietragrua, the plump daughter of a cloth merchant, who was not loath to show off her charms before company and gave her lips freely to the mustachioed officers to enjoy—how was she to know that "il cinese," as she mockingly called young Beyle, was in love with her? How was she to guess that he dreamed of her day and night as an unattainable idol, and that he was to make her memory imperishable by his romantic attachment?

True, he comes every evening to play faro with his brother officers; but he sits mumchance in a corner, and

turns pale when she speaks to him. Has he ever squeezed her hand, or pressed his knee against hers, or written her a note, or whispered "mi piace"? Buxom Angela is used to unambiguous advances on the part of French officers of dragoons, and she hardly gives a thought to the stumpy little subaltern in his corner. Thus he misses his chance of winning her favours, and never realizes how willingly and generously she bestows her favours on all and sundry. Despite his imposing sword and his big boots, Henri Beyle is as shy as ever he was in Paris, and this timid Don Juan is still a "virgin." Each day he determines, as night draws near, to undertake the necessary assault; he makes entries in his notebook, recording what older men have told him as to how to overcome a woman's virtuous resistance. But no sooner is our would-be Casanova in the presence of his beloved, his divinity, his Angela, than he becomes alarmed and perplexed, and blushes like a girl. At last he resolves to be a fully adult man; he makes up his mind to sacrifice his virginity. A Milanese professional offers herself as an altar for his sacrifice. "I have quite forgotten who she was or what she looked like," he writes in after years. Unfortunately she bestows on him the malady which the Constable of Bourbon had brought with him to Italy nearly three centuries before, and which ever since had passed by the name of the French evil. Thus the servitor of Mars, having ventured into the service of the sweet goddess of love, has for many years to submit to the thraldom of Mercury.

Paris, 1803. Again the scene is laid in a fifth-story attic. Again our hero is wearing civilian dress. Laid aside are the sabre, the spurs, the top-boots, the uniform; his

lieutenant's commission has been chucked into a corner of the room. He is sick to death of the soldier game: "J'en suis saoûl!" The idiots had merely to propose that he should carry out his duties as a garrison officer "seriously," should groom his horse, and display a certain amount of discipline; that was enough to make Henri Beyle take to his heels. Obedience, forsooth! This headstrong creature holds nothing so holy as "to order no other human being about and never to submit to the commands of others." He therefore sends a note to the minister, handing in his resignation. At the same time he writes to his father, a straitlaced monitor, begging him to forward some money. Much to his surprise, this father of his (whom he systematically calumniates in his writings) actually sends a monthly remittance. Not much, it is true; but enough to warrant the ordering of a decent suit of clothes, to buy imposing neckcloths, and fine white paper on which to write his plays. For Henri Beyle has made a fresh resolution: he will no longer be a mathematician; he wants to be a playwright.

The first attempts to initiate himself into this new profession take the form of frequent visits to the Comédie Française, where he studies the art at the feet of Corneille and Molière. Another discovery. If he is to be an efficient dramatist he must get to know women, must love and be loved, must find "une belle âme," "une âme aimante." He pays court to little Adèle Rebouffet, and enjoys the role of rejected lover to the full. Luckily for him, the young lady's mother, a lady of riper charms, consoles him two or three times a week in a practical manner for the waywardness of his inamorata. The experience is amusing and instructive; but it is not yet the real thing, the great love-affair he has dreamed of. Un-

deterred he sets out in search of his idol. At last he is fettered to the chariot of Louason, an actress at the Comédie Française, who tolerates his passionate adoration —at a distance. Henri is never more earnestly in love than when a woman denies herself to him, since he cares only for the unattainable. Soon our twenty-year-old lover is aflame with desire.

Marseilles, 1803. Sudden transformation, incredible almost.

Can this in truth be Henri Beyle, sometime lieutenant in Napoleon's army, Parisian dandy, a writer but yesterday? Is this really he, this clerk in a black apron, working in the basement of Meunier & Co., provision merchants, wholesale and retail? There he sits, perched on a high stool, adding up figures in a dirty and narrow street to the left of the harbour. The office is filled with the stench of oil and figs. Did he not, so recently as yesterday, indite verses expressing the sublimest aspirations? And here he is to-day handling raisins and coffee, sugar and flour, sending in claims to the firm's clients, trafficking with customs house officials. Yes, this is he, bullet-headed, hard-headed, as ever. Tristan dressed himself as a beggar in order to reach his beloved Isolde; many a princess has donned a page's suit and followed her knight to the wars. Henri Beyle has acted no less heroically. He has become a grocer's assistant in order to be near his Louason, who has been engaged at a theatre in Marseilles. What matter if all day he is dipping his fingers into sugar and flour, when at night he can meet an actress at the stage door, and can share her bed! Can he not watch her slim young body sporting in the waves and know that, for

the first time in his life, he is the proud possessor of all this beauty?

What a glorious time of fulfilment! Unfortunately there is nothing so dangerous for a person of romantic disposition as to become intimate with the ideal. One discovers that Marseilles, the queen of the Mediterranean, is just as much a provincial town as Grenoble, and that its streets are as foul and stinking as any in Paris. Also when one comes to live with one's goddess one is disappointed to find that her intelligence is not on a par with her looks—that she is, in fact, thoroughly stupid. Boredom sets in. At last a day dawns when the diva's engagement comes to an end. She speeds away to Paris, and he heaves a sigh of relief. Healed of one illusion, he is ready to set forth on the quest of another!

Brunswick, 1806. Once more we have a change of costume.

A uniform, it is true; but no longer the rough-and-ready garb of a subaltern which appeals merely to canteen girls, or to milliners' apprentices. Now hats are doffed respectfully by the Germans of rank and calling at the approach of Monsieur Henri Beyle, commissariat officer to the Grand Army, as he strolls along the street accompanied by Herr Von Strombeck or some other bigwig of Brunswick society. Yet it is no longer plain Henri Beyle we see. Since he has come to Germany, he has made an addition to his name, has made it worthy of his present position. He signs himself: Henri "de" Beyle. Napoleon has not granted our fainéant this title of nobility, has not even decorated his buttonhole with the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. Why should such distinctions be granted to a young man whose only business it is to secure

cushy jobs through the influence of Cousin Daru? But Henri Beyle, who is a keen observer, notices that the worthy Germans are attracted to a title as flies to a honey-pot. And surely if one frequents patrician gatherings where there are so many pretty and desirable young ladies to invite to the dance, one cannot be blamed if one refuses to appear as a commoner. Two little letters out of the whole alphabet are all that is needed in addition to a handsome uniform to create a suitable atmosphere around his person. Monsieur l'Intendant's task is a delicate one. He has been commissioned to raise a levy of five million francs, and, indeed, succeeds in extracting seven from the already plundered land of Brunswick. He is responsible for keeping order, for organizing supplies. He quits himself of his charge with commendable speed, and spends his leisure playing billiards, or going out shooting, or dallying with gentler prey. Even Germany can boast of appetizing morsels of femininity! His more refined cravings can be satisfied in the company of fair-haired Minchen, a girl of noble birth; while his coarser lusts find vent in the arms of a friend's inamorata who rejoices in the delectable name of Knabelhuber and with whom he passes the night. We see Henri is once more in clover. He feels no envy for the lot of the many marshals and generals who sip their soup in the blazing sun of Austerlitz and Jena. He sits in the shadow of war, and is well content to read his book, translate German poetry, and write exquisite letters to his sister Pauline. He is acquiring knowledge and experience, is developing into a connoisseur of life, is a straggler in the wake of every battle, an intellectual dilettante of every art; day by day he throws off further bonds, gaining freedom; and the wider his acquaintance with the world, the better he ob-

serves its phenomena, the more intricate is his cognition of himself.

VIENNA. May 31, 1809. In the Schottenkirche, which is dark, and almost empty. Early morning.

A few old men and women, dressed in threadbare mourning, are occupying the front pew. These are the relatives of dear old Papa Haydn. The French incendiary bombs falling on his beloved Vienna had been too much for the frail old man, they had literally frightened him to death. The composer of the Austrian national anthem died, a patriot to the end, whispering the words: "God save Emperor Francis." Then, with all speed, amid the tumult caused by the entry of the conquering army, they had hurried the corpse, unsubstantial as a child's, from the tiny suburban house in Gumpendorf, to the cemetery. Now the music lovers of Vienna are assembled for the solemn requiem mass in honour of their master. A respectable number of persons have ventured forth to pay their tribute to his memory, in spite of the fact that enemy soldiers are billeted in most of the houses. May be that among the congregation we could find a short-legged, peculiar looking man, Herr van Beethoven by name, a man with a massive, leonine head; perhaps among the boys singing in the organ-loft there is a twelve-year-old youngster who goes by the name of Franz Schubert. Suddenly, an officer of high rank in the French army, in full-dress uniform, enters the building, accompanied by a gentleman wearing academician's robes. The congregation is alarmed and horrified. Do the invaders mean to forbid them honouring old Papa Haydn, the best and gentlest of mortals? Nothing of the sort! Henri de Beyle, Auditeur de la Grande Armée, has come here in a private

capacity, having heard that Mozart's *Requiem* was to be sung. For a chance of hearing Mozart's or Cimarosa's works performed, this quaint warrior would ride a hundred miles and more. He deems forty bars of his beloved masters' music far more valuable than the most glorious of battlefields with its forty thousand dead. Noiselessly he slips into a pew and listens to the slow strains of the music. Strange to say, the *Requiem* does not appeal to him, he finds it too full of movement; this is not "his" Mozart, so light of wing, so buoyant. It is ever thus with him. When art overstrides the limits of what is simple and melodious to soar aloft into regions beyond the human, peopled with the wilder and more unbridled spirits of the everlasting elements, he feels out of his depth, estranged. He feels the same when, for the first time, he hears *Don Giovanni* performed at the Kärntnertor Theatre. And when the man in the neighbouring box, Herr van Beethoven (whose very name as yet means nothing to Beyle), in days to come launches his tempestuous music upon him, Stendhal will be no less alarmed at this divine chaos than is his great colleague in Weimar, Herr von Goethe himself.

The mass is said. Henri Beyle issues from the church, radiant with high spirits, resplendent in his uniform, and strolls along Graben. He is delighted with the beautiful town of Vienna, finds it enchanting; he loves its people, who make such good music, and are not so harsh and "thorough" as the Germans of the north. At the moment he should be at his office attending to the commissariat of the Grand Army. That, however, seems to him of quite secondary importance. Cousin Daru is slaving away like a nigger, and Napoleon is bound to come out victorious, anyway. Thank goodness, there are plenty of queer folk

in the world, to whom work is a pleasure. One can live at their expense! Thus does it come about that Henri Beyle, from childhood an adept in the devilish art of ingratitude, undertakes the easier and self-imposed task of consoling Madame Daru during her stay in Vienna, making up to her for her husband's devotion to duty. Can one take a better revenge upon a benefactor than by being agreeable to his wife? Madame Daru and Henri Beyle ride together in the Prater, they visit art galleries, and the charming residences of the Austrian nobility; they drive away to Hungary in a well-sprung carriage, what time the soldiers are dying on the field of Wagram and the worthy Daru is working in a sea of ink. Their afternoons are devoted to love, their evenings to music, preferably to Mozart at the Kärntnertor Theatre. Slowly, very slowly, the strange creature beneath the official's cloak comes to realize that for him all that is sweet and worth while in life belongs to the realm of art.

1810–1812. Paris. The Empire at the climax of its glory.

Life is ever more enjoyable. Plenty of money and no official duties; our hero has become (God knows through no merits of his own, but through the good offices of women friends) a member of the council of State and inspector of the crown buildings. But Napoleon does not make serious demands upon his councillors; they have plenty of time to take their walks abroad, or, rather, to drive about to their heart's content. For Henri Beyle, his purse well lined with these official moneys, has his own cabriolet, new, fresh, and shining with varnish. He dines at the Café de Foy, employs the best tailor in Paris to attend to his wardrobe, has a love intimacy with his cousin which he supplements (thus attaining to the ideal of his

youth) by an amourette with a dancer named Bereyter. Is it not amazing that one should have more success in the domain of love at thirty than at twenty? How incomprehensible women are, to be sure! The cooler one is, the more passionate do they become. Slowly, Paris, which had seemed so hateful in the callow student's eyes, begins to please him. Truly, life is a splendid affair. And, as chief of blessings, one has money and time, so much time forsooth that Beyle, of his own accord and in order to recall his beloved Italy to his mind, actually undertakes a piece of work. He writes his *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*. Ah, well, the writing of books on art is a pleasurable undertaking, and does not commit a man to anything. Especially delightful is it when, as is Henri Beyle's little way, one can copy most of the matter out of other people's books, filling in the crevices with anecdote and quip. What a joy to approach the great spirits among men, even if one can do so only in the role of an epicurean! Some day, perhaps (thinks Stendhal), when old age has come, I shall write books reminding me of days gone by and of the women I have known. But why should I bother to do so now? Life is too rich, too full, too lovely, to waste a minute of it at a writing-table.

1812–1813. On the move again! Napoleon is once more waging war; this time the field of operations is some thousand miles away from Paris. Russia, the far-off land of adventure, lures our insatiably inquisitive "tourist." This is certainly not an opportunity to be missed. He may visit the Kremlin and gaze at the Muscovites with his own eyes, travel eastward at the State expense—comfortably, of course, and running no personal risks; he will keep in the rearguard, just as he had done in Italy, Germany,

and Austria. In actual fact, Marie Louise entrusts him with a thick portfolio containing letters to her husband; he is instructed to reach Moscow as quickly as possible. Experience has taught Beyle the tedium of war when seen at close quarters. He, therefore, provides for his own amusement by taking with him the twelve manuscript volumes of his *Histoire de la peinture,* bound in green morocco leather, and the play which he had begun to write many years before. Where, indeed, can a man devote himself better to his own interests than at army headquarters? Later on, the great Talma will be summoned to Moscow, and the grand opera company; not much time in that case for suffering from boredom. Besides, there will be variations on the theme of love: Polish women, and Russian.

On the journey, Beyle only stops at the towns which can provide him with an evening's entertainment in the shape of a play or music. Even in war time, even when travelling, he must have art as a companion. But what a drama awaits him in Russia. Moscow in flames, a metropolis of the world disappearing in smoke; such a spectacle has not been witnessed by a poet since Nero's day. Henri Beyle does not stay to indite an ode in honour of the tragic spectacle, and his letters are strangely silent concerning so unpleasant an experience. The subtle epicurean has long felt that all this military prancing about the world is far less important than a dozen bars of music or a clever book; an emotional tremor of the heart means more to him than all the guns of Borodino; and his historical sense is still limited to the history of his own life. He, therefore, rescues a beautiful edition of Voltaire from the conflagration, meaning to take it home as

a "souvenir de Moscou." But this time, Mars and his icy allies frustrate the schemes of our prince of shirkers. Monsieur l'Auditeur Beyle, arrived at the Beresina, hardly has time to shave himself with his wonted care (and he is the only officer in the Grand Army to trouble to do such a thing under the peculiar circumstances of the retreat!) before he is obliged to scurry across the bridge if he is not to be submerged with its ruins. His diary, his *Histoire de la peinture*, his beautiful edition of Voltaire, his horse, his fine new furs, his valise—all are left behind for the Cossacks to enjoy. With torn clothes, dirty, hunted, bedraggled, his hands and face chapped by exposure to the frosty air, he makes good his escape to Prussia. A gasp of relief—and forthwith he goes to the opera. Just as for many a hot bath would have been the first thought, so does Henri Beyle turn to music for refreshment. Thus for him the Russian campaign and the destruction of the Grand Army is no more than an interlude between pleasant evenings spent at the opera: *Matrimonio segreto* in Dresden on the outward journey; *Clemenzia di Tito* in Königsberg on the homeward route.

1814–1821. Milan. Henri Beyle has again become a civilian. He has had more than enough of wars. At close quarters, one battle looks much the same as another; the same thing is to be witnessed at all of them, i. e. Nothing! Enough of official duties and fatherlands and slaughter, of useless papers and officers. If Napoleon, with his "courromanie," his mania for warmongering, should once more endeavour to become supreme in France, well and good, he'd have to do so without the help of Monsieur l'Auditeur Beyle, who is sick of obeying orders, who de-

sires nothing but the most natural—and yet the most difficult—thing in the world: at last, at long last, to manage his own life as he himself thinks fit.

Three years earlier, in the interval between two campaigns, Beyle had rushed away to Italy, as happy and carefree as a child, taking two thousand francs of his own to play about with. Already at that time he had experienced a feeling which was henceforward never to leave him, a yearning ache for the days of his youth; and youth for him spelt Italy. Italy, and Angela Pietragrua whom he had loved so diffidently in his humble sub-lieutenant days, and to whom his thoughts speed as he drives over the passes he crossed with the rearguard of the Army of Italy so long ago! He arrives in Milan towards nightfall. Quickly he washes the dust from face and hands, puts on fresh clothes, and away he flies to his heart's haven, the Scala Theatre, there to refresh himself in music. Truly, as he says, "Music awakens love."

Next day he speeds to her house; she appears, beautiful as of yore, greets him politely but as though he were a stranger. He introduces himself. "Henri Beyle." The name means nothing to her. He recalls to her memory the names of certain of his comrades, Joinville and the rest. At length his beloved's face is irradiated with a smile, as she exclaims: "Ah, ah, Ella è il cinese!" (Ah, you are the Chinaman!)—that hateful nickname is all that Angela Pietragrua can remember about her romantic lover. But Henri Beyle is no longer a youth of seventeen. He boldly makes avowal of his love, tells her of his passion of earlier days. She looks at him in astonishment: "Why on earth did you not tell me about this at the time?" Gladly would she have granted what he wanted, a little favour any kindhearted woman would be pleased

to give. Happily they can make up now for lost opportunities! Soon the incurable romanticist, eleven years behind the times it is true, is able to record on his braces the date of this memorable conquest: "21 Septembre 1811, 11 heures ½ du matin."

Then he had been recalled to Paris. Once again, for the last time, in 1814, he is sent off to administer provinces in the name of the war-crazy Corsican, has "to defend his country." Fortunately—yes, fortunately, for Henri Beyle was no patriot and was inordinately pleased when the wars came to an end, even though the end meant a defeat for France—the three emperors made their entry into Paris. Now he can go to Italy, settle there for life, free from official positions, having shaken the dust of "la patrie" off his feet for ever. Splendid years, consecrated exclusively to music and to women, to conversations, to writing, and to art. Years of love: of sweethearts who played him false, like the all-too-yielding Angela; or such as through modesty rejected his advances, like the beautiful Mathilde. Years during which he came to know himself better and better; during which, night after night, he bathed his soul in music at the Scala; during which he conversed with the choicest spirits of the epoch, Lord Byron for instance; during which he examined the art treasures of Italy from Naples to Ravenna. Owing allegiance to none, his own master! Incomparable years of freedom! Evviva la libertà!!!

1821. Paris. Evviva la libertà? Better be discreet as to the use of the word "liberty" within the Italian frontiers these days. The Austrian masters and authorities are apt to look sourly at those who utter it. Nor is it wise to write books, even if they are the most blatant plagiarisms

like the *Lettres sur Haydn* or are three parts copied out of the works of other authors, like *L'histoire de la peinture en Italie* and *Rome, Naples, et Florence.* All unawares one sprinkles the pages copiously with the salt and pepper of witty sallies which unduly tickle the noses of the men in power. Before one knows where one is, the Austrian censor, Herr Wabruschek (was ever name more sapiently chosen!), will pounce upon some of these passages and report them to the minister for police, Herr Sedlnitzky, in Vienna. Thus a man of independent spirit may easily come to be looked upon as one of the carbonari, by the Austrians, or as a spy, by the Italians. Therefore it is better to betake oneself elsewhere, the poorer by one more illusion. Besides, for the full enjoyment of freedom one needs money; and his bastard of a father (seldom has Beyle found a more courtly epithet for his unhappy parent) has shown once for all what a silly ass a man can be, when, in spite of avarice and hard work the old buffer has not been able to leave the most modest of legacies behind him. Whither? One rots in Grenoble; unfortunately the days of comfortable travel with the rearguard of an army are over and done with since the Bourbon has got his fat fist on the shekels. There seems nothing better to do than return to Paris, return to existence in an attic, and there to grind out a livelihood as a writer, to turn what has hitherto been no more than a pastime into a serious profession.

1828. PARIS. We are in the drawing room at Madame de Tracy's house. She is the wife of the philosopher, Destutt de Tracy.

Midnight. The candles are burned wellnigh down to the socket. The gentlemen play whist. Madame de Tracy,

an elderly dame, is seated on a sofa talking to a marchioness and another lady friend. She is not very attentive to the conversation; her ear is on the stretch. From the next room dubious noises are issuing, the shrill giggle of a woman, the sonorous laugh of a man; then an indignant, "Mais non, c'est trop"; followed by a smothered burst of laughter. Madame de Tracy becomes fidgety; for surely it must be that horrid fellow Beyle, regaling the ladies with spicy stories. He is by nature a clever and refined gentleman, amusing, though somewhat extravagant; but he has been corrupted by the people he associates with, actresses and the like, and especially by that dreadful Italian woman, Madame Pasta. The hostess rises, makes her excuses, and trips away to the neighbouring room, hoping to bring the company there to a sense of decorum. Yes, Beyle is the culprit, withdrawn into the shadow of the chimney corner, doubtless to conceal his wide girth; he is holding a glass of punch in his hand, and is spouting forth a stream of anecdotes that would make a trooper blush. The ladies look as if they were ready for flight; they laugh and protest, yet they stay to hear more, fascinated and inquisitive, completely under the spell of the famous raconteur. He looks like a satyr, red and corpulent, with sparkling eyes, jovial and shrewd. As Madame de Tracy approaches, he breaks off, unable to withstand the severity of her gaze. The ladies seize their opportunity, and, amid laughter, beat a hasty retreat.

The candles flicker out one by one. The lackeys escort the guests downstairs, lighting them on their way with guttering tapers. Three or four carriages are drawn up before the front door. The ladies get in, accompanied by their squires. Beyle is left alone, a disconsolate figure on

the doorstep. No one thinks of giving him a lift. He serves their purposes well enough as a buffoon; otherwise he counts as nothing in a woman's eyes. Countess Curial has given him his congé; he has not enough money to keep a dancer as his mistress; age is slowly creeping upon him. He walks home through the rain, thoroughly out of humour. What matter if his clothes are soiled with mud? His tailor's bill has not yet been paid. He sighs deeply. The best life had to offer lies away in the past, one ought really to make an end of oneself. He clambers up to the top story of the house where he lives in the Rue de Richelieu. His breathing is heavy. Lighting a candle, he runs his fingers through sheafs of papers. This does not mend his mood. A pitiable balance sheet, indeed! His fortune is spent, his books bring in nothing, only seventeen copies of his *Essai sur l'amour* have been sold in eleven years. No later than yesterday, his publisher had quizzically remarked: "Votre livre est sacré, car personne n'y touche!" Thus his income has dwindled to five francs a day—a tolerable competence for a handsome youth, but miserably inadequate to supply the needs of a stout, middle-aged gentleman who loves women and liberty. Better put an end to it all. For the fifth time in the course of this dreary month, Henri Beyle sits down and writes his will. "I, the undersigned, bequeath to my cousin Romain Colomb, all my belongings at No. 71, rue de Richelieu. I wish to be taken straight to the cemetery, and the expenses of my burial shall not exceed thirty francs." Then, as postscript: "I beg Romain Colomb to forgive me for causing him the annoyances which lie ahead of him; above all I enjoin him not to grieve over this unavoidable event."

"This unavoidable event." His friends will understand

the cryptic words when, summoned to the dead man's room, they find the bullet in his brain instead of in the army revolver! To-night, however, Henri Beyle is weary. He will wait till to-morrow before he commits suicide. Next day, some friends drop in and cheer him up. As they rummage his quarters, one of them happens upon a piece of paper inscribed with the word "Julien." What does it mean? They are inquisitive to hear. "Oh, I was thinking of writing a novel," answers Stendhal. His friends are enthusiastically in favour of the idea; they succeed in putting courage into the melancholic's heart. He sets to work. The title "Julien" is replaced by another which is destined to become immortal: *Le Rouge et le Noir*. From that day, "Henri Beyle" ceases to exist. His place is taken by another, Stendhal by name, whose fame will never pass away.

1831. Civita Vecchia. A fresh transformation.

Great guns fire a salute, colours are dipped, as a man of portly figure, dressed in the over-elaborate uniform of the French diplomatic and consular service, steps ashore. Attention! This fine person in an embroidered waistcoat and gold laced trousers is the consul of France, Monsieur Henri Beyle. Again an upheaval has flung him into the saddle: last time it was war; to-day it is the July revolution. Now we do well to vaunt our liberalism, to make known how opposed we were to the Bourbon regime. Thanks to the good offices of our lady friends we have been sent as consul to the beloved south. Beyle was to have gone to Trieste, but unfortunately Herr von Metternich regarded the author of certain obnoxious books as an undesirable alien, and refused him a visa. So he must e'en make the best of the matter and settle down in Civita

Vecchia; when all's said and done, the place is in Italy, and France will pay her consul fifteen thousand francs a year.

Need the reader blùsh if he cannot straightway point to Civita Vecchia on the map? Certainly not. Of all Italian cities, this is the most pitiable, a breeding-place of diseases, scorching in the heat of the African winds, a silted-up haven dating from classical antiquity, a town that has fallen upon evil days, deserted, dull, empty; "one perishes of boredom" there. Henri Beyle's chief pleasure in this God-forsaken hole is to leave it as often as possible, to shake off his official duties, and betake himself to the highroad leading to Rome. He should be sending in reports, conducting negotiations, sitting in his office, and so forth. But the dunderheads in the Foreign Office at Paris never read his dispatches, so why waste brains and hard work upon so unappreciative an audience? He therefore thrusts all the work on to his subordinate's shoulders. This man, Lysimaque Caftangliu Tavernier, is a scurvy brute whose silence as to his chief's frequent absences has to be bought by procuring the rascal admittance into the Legion of Honour. Even in these matters, Henri Beyle fails in a sense of responsibility. To cheat a government which sends one of its poets to rot in such an execrable post seems to our worthy egoist a plain and honourable duty. Surely it is better to visit the art galleries in Rome in the company of a kindred spirit, or to rush off to Paris under any pretext, rather than to sit tight at one's desk and allow oneself to become dull-witted? Can an intelligent man be expected to find satisfaction for ever in the conversation of an old antiquary like Signor Bucci, or in the empty chatter of the local gentry? Far better to talk to oneself. Volumes of ancient

chronicles are to be purchased at secondhand bookshops, and the best of them can be turned into novels; one may be fifty years of age, but one can always assert that the heart is as young as ever. Yes, that's it: to forget the lapse of time no more is needed than to turn back to one's own life; and our portly consul looks at the lad he was in those far-off days as though he were a stranger: he feels that he is "making discoveries about someone totally alien" to himself. Henri Beyle, alias Stendhal, writes the story of his youth, disguises himself as H. B., as Henri Brulard, so that nobody may guess who his hero really is. He writes the record in thick tomes, forgetting his present self, just as others have forgotten him, living wholly in the past and experiencing as it were a renewed springtime of existence.

1836–1839. Paris.

Back again. How wonderful! Resurrection, a return to the light. God bless all women, every good comes from them. They have cajoled and flattered Comte de Molé, now risen to become minister, so successfully that he has consented to overlook the fact that Monsieur Henri Beyle, who should have been fulfilling his duties as consul in Civita Vecchia, has without permission extended his three weeks' leave to a three-year vacation with never a hint that he means to return to his post. Here he is, comfortably ensconced in Paris, receiving his consular income regularly, in fine fettle, with plenty of leisure, good society, and (in an unostentatious manner) enjoying the pleasures of love. Now he can do what he has so long been yearning to do: pace up and down his room and dictate his novel *La Chartreuse de Parme*. For when a man's purse is lined with a salary duly paid at

regular intervals by the State, when, in addition, the shackles of official duties have been thrown off, then those idiots of publishers need no longer be considered, the idiots who pay a mealy-mouthed writer like Monsieur de Chateaubriand a hundred thousand francs, and grudge Henri Beyle the most paltry remuneration. Once a man is free, he may permit himself the luxury of writing a novel which is neither sugary sweet nor soused with rose-water. For Henri Beyle there is no other heaven than that where freedom abides.

Soon, alas, this heaven of his tumbles about his ears. That splendid, that far-seeing minister, Comte de Molé, his protector (surely a man worthy of a monument if ever man was), is replaced in the foreign office by Marshal Soult. The latter has never heard of Stendhal; all he knows is that Monsieur le Consul Henri Beyle has been appointed and is being paid to represent France in the Papal States, and that instead of performing the duties of his office he has been for three years enjoying himself in the Parisian playhouses. At first the general is surprised; then he becomes indignant. How dare this lazy official live a life of ease and pleasure? He commands instant return to Civita Vecchia. Henri Beyle sullenly puts on his uniform, and "Stendhal" is given the go-by. At the age of fifty-four, Beyle, weary and discomfited, has once more to tread the exile's road. He feels it is for the last time.

PARIS. March 22, 1841.

A corpulent man is dragging his heavy limbs along the boulevard. Where are now those happy days of yore when he trod this same boulevard, twirling his cane, a magnet for women's eyes? He leans upon his stout walking-stick,

every step an effort. Stendhal has grown very old during this last year, the light in his eyes is quenched, his lids are heavy and blue; his lips twitch. A few months ago he had had a stroke—a grim reminder of his first love experience in Milan so long ago. They bled him, and tortured him with salves and mixtures. At length the foreign minister permitted the sick man to leave Civita Vecchia and come back to Paris. But what is Paris to him in his present state? How can he relish Balzac's splendid notice of his *Chartreuse de Parme?* A man who already feels the icy hand of death upon him cannot enjoy these first tender blossoms of celebrity. The sad and weary wraith creeps towards his rooms, hardly raising his eyes to glance at the dazzling equipages, the gaily-chattering crowd of pedestrians, the cocottes rustling by in their silk gowns. He is nothing but a black speck of misery trailing along the brightly-lit street, which is merry with the evening pleasure-seekers.

Suddenly there is a rush towards a certain spot. The stout gentleman has collapsed just in front of the Bourse. He lies there, his eyes staring, his face congested. A second stroke has laid the old man low. Hasty hands wrench the neckcloth away, for it seems to be throttling him. He is carried into the nearest chemist's; thence to his room near by. The place is littered with papers, with notices, with freshly-begun manuscripts, with diaries, and what not. In one of them is to be read these prophetic words: "I do not find it ridiculous to die in the street—so long as this is not done intentionally."

1842.

An enormous wooden chest is being carted by goods train from Civita Vecchia, through Italy to France. It is

addressed to Romain Colomb, Stendhal's cousin and legatee, who proposes to issue a collected edition of all his relative's writings. Why should Romain trouble to do this for a man whose death has been dismissed with a few lines in the newspapers? Out of devotion to his cousin's memory, that is all! He has the chest prized open. What a mountain of papers, how illegible the cramped script, the secret cyphers. What an orgy of writing! A man to write so persistently must indeed have suffered from perennial boredom! Romain selects a few of the more legible, and starts making a fair copy. On *Lucien Leuwen* he scribbles: "Rien à faire"; the autobiographical *Henri Brulard* is likewise rejected as undecipherable; and is doomed to remain in the chest for decades. What's to be done with all this rubbish? Colomb packs everything back in the chest and dispatches it to Crozet, a friend of Stendhal's youth, who, in his turn, sends the stuff to the library at Grenoble where it at last finds a resting-place. The librarian, following the rules of the institution, has each packet docketed, and registered in a book. Requiescat in pace! Sixty folio volumes, Stendhal's life work and his own record of his life, have been buried away in the great mausoleum of books, and can collect the dust of ages, undisturbed. Four decades are to pass by before anyone dreams of soiling his fingers with these dusty folios.

1888. Paris. November.

The population has grown, the town is spreading out in all directions. Paris numbers nearly eight million legs which are not always inclined to walk; so a new omnibus route is planned to serve Montmartre. A tiresome obstruction lies in the way. The cemetery! Technical science

can remedy this: a bridge shall be built, and the living shall pass on their way above the dead. But there are a few of the graves which will have to be disturbed willy-nilly. In the fourth row there is a tombstone, No. 11, a dilapidated, forgotten affair bearing a strange inscription: "Arrigio Beyle, Milanese, scrisse, visse, amò." An Italian buried here? What an odd legend. He must have been a queer sort of man. As chance would have it, someone appeared upon the scene who remembered vaguely that there had once been a writer of the name of Henri Beyle. It was his whim to have the misstatement inscribed on his tomb. Quickly a committee was set up to collect a fund for the purchase of a new marble tablet whereon the same inscription should be engraved. Thus, quite suddenly, in 1888, after forty-six years of oblivion, the name of Henri Beyle was on everyone's lips.

Curious to relate, in that very same year, a young teacher of languages, Stanislas Stryienski, whom fate had doomed to eke out a living in Grenoble, seeking relief from the suffocating boredom of his existence, spent many hours in the municipal library. His attention is attracted to some fusty-looking manuscripts lying neglected in a corner. He rids them of the accumulated dust, unties them, sets himself to read them and to decipher those that are in code. The more he reads the more absorbed does he become. He seeks and finds a publisher: *Henri Brulard*, the autobiographic romance, and *Lucien Leuwen*, see the light of day, and with their appearance the true Stendhal makes his bow to the world. His genuine contemporaries hail his work with enthusiasm, for the author had been born before his time and could only be appreciated by a later generation. Did Beyle himself not say: "Je serai célèbre vers 1880"? The phrase occurs

again and again in his writings: it was then no more than a cry of despair; now it has become an amazing reality. At the very time when his bodily remains were raised out of the earth to be given another sepulchre, the work of his brain was brought forth from the shadows of forgetfulness. An unbeliever had foretold the date of his own resurrection. In his every word he showed himself a genuine artist; by this prophecy, however, he proved himself a seer.

AN EGO AND THE WORLD

Il ne pouvait plaire, il était trop différent.

The cleavage in Henri Beyle's nature which is reflected in his creative work—this cleavage was inborn, was a heritage from his parents who were an ill-assorted couple.

Chérubin Beyle ("the bastard," as Henri, the exasperated son, was wont to name his father) is the embodiment of the provincial bourgeois, pigheaded, miserly, crafty, wholly devoted to money-grubbing. We have his likeness painted for us in masterly fashion by Flaubert and by Balzac, who have scornfully limned the features of the tribe on the canvas of world literature. From Chérubin the son inherits his thickset, paunchy figure and his absorption in himself, his egoism. Henriette Gagnon, the mother, hails from the south, and has the characteristic features of the Latin peoples. In psychological make-up, she is likewise akin to the Latins. Lamartine might well have written poems in her honour, or Jean-Jacques Rousseau sentimentalized over her, for she was of a tender disposition, musical, rather gushing, sensuous as are so many southerners. From her, Henri inherited his passion for love adventures, his inordinate powers of sensation, his agonizing and almost womanish nervous impressionability. Tossed hither and thither by these two contending streams in his blood, this strange compost of opposing qualities oscillates between the paternal and the maternal legacies, between realism and romanticism. Thus

the writer, Henri Beyle, is doomed from the outset to be a dual personality and to live in two competing worlds.

At an early date little Henri showed a preference for his mother. Indeed, as he himself confesses, his love for her was tinctured with passion. His father is the object of a jealous and scornful hatred, a hatred which is cold-blooded, inquisitorial, and cynical. Psychoanalysts may rejoice, for nowhere in the whole range of literature will they find the Œdipus complex portrayed with greater precision than in the early pages of Beyle's autobiographical romance *Henri Brulard*. But death all too soon claimed the beloved mother. Henri was no more than seven when he was left to the tender mercies of his father. From the day when Henri, a lad of sixteen, left Grenoble in the diligence, old Chérubin was dead so far as his son was concerned. Henceforward young Beyle was silent, inimical, disdainful of the parent he had thus arbitrarily buried out of sight. Yet the old man was not so easily shaken off. For fifty years he persisted under Henri's skin, his spirit continued to move in Henri's blood-current; for fifty years the two psychic inheritances from Beyle and from Gagnon ancestry strove each with the other in Henri's soul, without either tendency being able to conquer. Feeling would at one moment overwhelm intellect, to be in its turn crushed by reason. This product of discord could never wholly belong to one sphere or to the opposing sphere. The intellect and the feelings are for ever at war, and rarely have we been privileged to witness more splendid fights than upon the battleground which goes by the name of Stendhal.

At the outset let it be clearly understood that in these contests there is never a victor, never a decisive action. Stendhal is not conquered by his opposites, nor is he torn

to pieces by them. The epicurean creature is protected from the more tragical blows of destiny by a certain ethical indolence and a coolly observant curiosity which is ever on the alert. All his life he cautiously avoids the disquieting and elemental forces which rise to encounter him; for the first commandment he has engraved on the tablets in his wisdom is "keep your own end up." Just as in practical life he sees to it that he is always placed in the rearguard of the Napoleonic armies, sheltered from the bullets, so also in the battlefield of his soul, Stendhal chooses the part of spectator rather than that of active participator in the life-and-death tussle. He is totally lacking in the ultimate moral self-immolation of a Pascal, a Nietzsche, or a Kleist, each of whom raised the conflict to the plane of a decisive issue. Stendhal is content with the role of onlooker. Aware of the cleavage within him, he is nevertheless able, from the secure vantage ground given him by his spiritual self-possession, to contemplate the duel as an artistic drama. He is, therefore, never completely distraught by the discordances of his being, he does not seriously hate them. Nay, rather, he is fond of them. He loves the precision of his intellect, clear-faceted as a diamond: he considers it a priceless treasure because it helps him to understand the world; because, amid the turmoil of feelings, it bestows on him the power of a candidly serene and unqualified moderation. On the other hand, Stendhal loves his excessive emotionalism and his hypersensitiveness, because they rescue him from the stupidity and boredom of everyday life, because these headlong emotions pluck the soul from the narrow confines of the body and allow it to wing its way through the empyrean. He is quick to realize the dangers of both extremes: the intellect may spoil the moment of

extremest rapture; the feelings, by luring him into realms that lie beyond the range of the definite, may smudge the precision of his mind—and this precision of thought is a vital necessity to Stendhal. He would fain teach his opposites to acquire some of the qualities they lack, learning one from the other. Unwearied are his efforts to intellectualize his feelings, to make them clear and precise; continuous his endeavours to put passion into the rational powers of his mind. All his life, the romantic intellectualist and the intellectual romanticist have to dwell together within the same tense and sensitive body.

Stendhal's formulas, therefore, always result in a fraction, never in an integer. Only in a cloven world can he fully realize his personality. Were it otherwise, his purely intellectual work would have been inadequate, and the lyrical intensity of his feelings would have fallen short. His greatest achievements are due to an intermixture of these innate contradictions. "Lorsqu'il n'avait pas d'émotion, il était sans esprit," he once said of himself. He worships day-dreaming as the most precious need of existence: "Ce que j'ai le plus aimé, était la rêverie." Yet he cannot live without its opposite, alertness: "Si je ne vois pas clair, tout mon monde est anéanti." He is just as dependent upon his intellectual faculties as upon his extravagant idealistic traits; above all he needs those voluptuously tingling vibrations of opposites ramifying into his every nerve. Goethe declared that what men usually spoke of as enjoyment was for him always something that "lay half way between sensation and intelligence." In the same way, Stendhal, thanks to the fiery mingling of spirit and flesh, is able to enjoy the sensuous beauty of the universe. He realizes that it is the contact of his two opposites that generates the spiritual electricity, the sparks

which tingle along the nerve fibres, the crepitating, tense, and stimulating vivacity, which we can still feel to-day on merely opening a book by Stendhal. Thanks to the transference of his vitality from pole to pole, he can savour to the full the creative, illuminating fires of his being; and his instinct of self-glorification, ever on the watch, puts all his passions in motion in order to keep up the tension. Just as the muscles require constant exercise if they are not to become lax, so the psychical powers, if they are to be kept elastic, must be unceasingly exercised, and drilled. This is precisely what Stendhal does by his innumerable and extraordinarily detailed observations in the world of psychological reactions, and he performs his task with a competence rarely exhibited by anyone in the field of letters. He practises his art with the same indefatigable enthusiasm as a musician handling his instrument or as a soldier his weapons. He never tires in the work of training his mental ego. In order to keep the feelings at high tension, in a condition of "érectisme morale," he whips them up every evening by listening to an opera, and even as an elderly man he fearlessly plunges into new love adventures. If he suspects his memory of playing him false, he subjects it to a course of special exercises, sharpening his faculties of perception on the strop of self-observation. He utilizes every book and every conversation for the discovery of "trois ou quatre pieds cubes d'idées nouvelles par jour"; he fills himself with an ever sublimer measure of intensity, exciting himself, straining every nerve only to curb it again; perpetually tuning up his intelligence, constantly forging his feelings anew.

It is owing to this systematic and refined technique of self-fulfilment that Stendhal is able to attain to so high a degree of spiritual delicacy both in the realm of the

senses and in that of the intellect. But one has to pay the penalty for keeping the nervous mechanism in such intense vibration, so alert and knowledgeable and voluptuous. Delicacy implies vulnerability; and that which is a boon for art, denotes for the artist, almost invariably, danger and distress. This super-organized being called Stendhal suffers terribly in his own elemental universe, and is an alien in the lachrymose and sentimental world of his day. A man of so keen an intelligence must inevitably feel every stupidity as an affront; so romantic a soul cannot fail to resent every callousness, every demonstration of spiritual inertia on the part of the average individual. There was once a princess of fairyland who, in spite of a hundred coverlets and featherbeds, detected the pea under her mattress. So does Stendhal wince at every blundering word and every unseemly gesture. False romanticism, coarse exaggeration, pusillanimous vagueness, react on him like cold water on an aching tooth. He suffers as acutely from excess as from dearth, from manifestations of banality as from those of preciosity. "Mes bêtes d'aversion, ce sont le vulgaire et l'affecté."

One evening he was contemplating a Napoleonic battle from afar: the murderous medley, vibrant with the roar of cannon, illuminated in the red glow of the setting sun, touched him to the quick. He quivered in sympathetic horror. Suddenly a general who stood near by was moved to say: "A battle of giants!"—and preened himself on the aptness of his observation. But Stendhal's whole world was shattered by the bathos. He hurried away from the spot, cursing the war, filled with bitterness, disillusioned, bereaved. Muddy thinking, exaggeration in speech, undue exhibition of feeling, always aroused irritation. He could not tolerate his companions because they were purveyors

of sickly romanticism (Chateaubriand) and the pseudo-heroic (Victor Hugo). In general he found his fellow-men difficult to get on with. But this hypersensitiveness was turned against himself, too, at times; he could not escape it. As soon as he detected himself diverging, be it never so slightly, from genuine sentiment, introducing an unnecessary crescendo, lapsing into sentimentality, straying into vagueness or dishonesty, he rapped himself over the knuckles as ruthlessly as any schoolmaster an undisciplined pupil. His alert and relentless understanding tracked any hint of spuriousness into the remotest corners, and inexorably wrenched away every veil. Rarely, indeed, has an artist constrained himself to be thus truthful with himself; seldom has a student of the soul so cruelly supervised his own most secret deviations.

Because he knows himself so well, Stendhal realizes better than anyone else that this superabundant sensibility of nerve and soul is a constituent part of his genius, is his greatest virtue and his greatest danger. "Ce qui ne fait qu'effleurer les autres me blesse jusqu'au sang." For this reason he instinctively, from youth onwards, feels that these "others" are polar opposites to himself, belonging to an alien spiritual family, persons with whom he has no kinship, has no common understanding, no common idiom. Already as an awkward youngster in Grenoble, he was aware of this difference between himself and "the others," when he saw his schoolfellows hallooing in heedless enjoyment; and later, more poignantly, when as a raw subaltern in Italy, he despairingly tried to imitate the enviable swagger with which his brother officers dragged their sabres along the pavement and ogled the Milanese women.

In those days he had blushed at his own inferiority.

For years he had endeavoured to quell his own nature, to swank like the rest of them, to impress the crowd. Gradually, laboriously, and painfully, however, he had come to find a peculiar charm in his irremediable differentiation from the herd. His lack of success with the fair sex was due to timidity, to untimely accesses of shyness; slowly he came to analyze the reasons for his mischance: the psychologist awoke within him. He became inquisitive concerning himself, began to discover himself. At first he noticed merely that he was different from the ruck, that he was more delicately poised, more sensitive, more keen-sighted. None of his associates felt things so passionately as he, none thought so clearly, not one of them was so strangely compounded—capable of the finest sensations, and yet unable to achieve anything in the practical sphere. Doubtless he was not unique; there had been other specimens of this "être supérieur"; how else could he understand Montaigne so well? What an acerb and fundamentally shrewd man this Montaigne was, to be sure, so scornful of everything that was obvious and crude. He could not feel so perfectly at one with Montaigne, with Mozart, unless the souls of them all were similarly touched to fine uses!

Thus at thirty, Stendhal begins for the first time to realize that he is not a failure among men. Rather does he belong to the rare company of "êtres privilégiés," privileged beings who spring up from time to time among the most various nations and races and countries, who are as it were precious jewels shining forth from the ordinary conglomerate. He feels that among them he is at home, whereas among his French contemporaries he feels a stranger, and he therefore throws off his allegiance to France as he would a garment too small for him. He

belongs to another, an invisible fatherland, peopled by mortals endowed with more delicate spiritual organs and more responsive nerves, creatures who never rushed together in dull-witted crowds or assembled in business cliques, but who from time to time sent forth a messenger to their age and generation.

For these "happy few" who do not need emphasis as an aid to understanding, whose instinct guides them to penetrate every hole and corner of the heart, for these alone does he write, transcending the limitations of his own century; to them alone does he reveal the secrets of his sensations. What cares he, now that he has at last learned to despise the crowd, if the vociferous multitude, which is only capable of perceiving the fat and crudely coloured letters of an advertisement, only able to taste overspiced and overcooked viands—what cares he if such persons fail to understand him? "Que m'importent les autres?" He puts the words into the mouth of one of his characters, Julien, but the scornful utterance rises from his own heart. He need not be ashamed that, in so coarse and dunderheaded a world, his writings are not a success! "L'égalité est la grande loi pour plaire"; a man must be on a level with his generation if he is to please the human pack. Thank God for being "un être extraordinaire," "un être supérieur," the unique, the special case, an individual, a different being, not one in a flock of silly sheep! All his external humiliations, his failure to rise in his career, his making a fool of himself where women are concerned, his complete lack of success in the field of literature, everything that seems on the surface to be calculated to depress him, becomes for Stendhal, as soon as he has made the discovery of his own distinctness, a source of delight, is looked upon by him as a triumphal token of

his superiority. His feeling of inferiority becomes sublimated into resplendent arrogance, that delicately poised arrogance of Stendhal's which is only to be sensed by those who understand, that arrogance which is so magnificently cheerful and debonair. He deliberately holds aloof from the commonalty, and has but one aim in life, "de travailler son caractère." For him, now, "il n'y a d'intéressant que ce qui est un peu extraordinaire." Very well, then, let us be extraordinary, let us foster this germ of singularity within ourself! No Dutch tulip-maniac had ever cultivated a new species with greater care and hedged it round with more ingenious precautions than did Stendhal his aloofness. He preserved it in a peculiar essence of his own distilling, an essence he christened "Beylisme"; it was a philosophy which had no other purpose in view than to preserve Henri Beyle unaltered in Henri Beyle. He shut himself away behind a thorny thicket of queerness and mystification; he guarded with the fanaticism of a miser the treasure chamber of his ego, hardly permitting even his most intimate friends a glimpse through the bars.

In order to isolate himself more effectually from his compeers, he deliberately enters into opposition with his generation and lives like his own Julien, "en guerre avec toute la société." As a writer he mocks at style, and proclaims the bourgeois code of laws to be the genuine ars poetica; as a soldier he despises war; as a politician he disdains history; as a Frenchman he gibes at the French. He sets up a barbed-wire fence between himself and his fellow mortals, in order that they may not come near him. Need we wonder that, in the circumstances, he fails to achieve distinction in any career? He is delighted to find that he fits in nowhere, belongs to no class, or race,

or rank, or fatherland; is a two-legged paradox, treading its chosen road upon its own pair of feet, instead of one of a servile flock, following the broad road of success. Better by far to remain behind, to slip aside, to stand alone: free!

With the insight of genius, Stendhal knew how to cultivate freedom, to liberate himself from every coercive influence. When, from time to time, forced by dire necessity, he adopted a profession and donned a uniform, he gave only just so much of his time and energy to his duties as would keep him in his post. No matter the official position he accepted, the profession he practised, the job he undertook—he was a master of tricks and devices to secure unqualified independence. Though his cousin Daru may drape him in a military cloak, he never feels himself to be a soldier; though he may write novels, he never feels he has become a professional man of letters; though he may indue the consular uniform, he is careful to arrange that a substitute shall sit in the consular office and do Henri Beyle's work. But whether he be soldier or civilian, artist or man of science, Stendhal never reveals his true self to his associates, so that none of those who come in contact with him suspect that they are in the company of one of the greatest French writers of the day. With the solitary exception of Balzac, his contemporaries in the world of literature saw nothing more in him than an amusing "causeur," an ex-cavalry officer who occasionally took a ride in their demesnes. Schopenhauer is possibly the only other example of a great thinker living in similar isolation, sundered from his fellows, equally unsuccessful, hedged round by his pride and his unusualness, as was Stendhal, his brother in matters psychological.

Thus a part of Stendhal always eluded those who en-

countered him, and the preservation of this elusive element was his main business in life. He never denied that his introverted attitude was selfish, was autocratic; on the contrary, he vaunted his preoccupation with himself, christening it "egotism." Yes, "egotism," not on any account to be confounded with its plebeian, horny-handed, bastard brother, egoism. For egoism would fain clutch at everything which belongs to others; it has covetous fingers, and is eaten up with envy. It is jealous, petty, insatiable. Even when it possesses a measure of spiritual power, this is not capable of freeing it from its unimaginative brutality in the world of feeling. Stendhal's egotism, on the contrary, has no desire to filch others' possessions. With an aristocratic and haughty gesture, he leaves the money-grubbers to enjoy their hoarded wealth, the ambitious to preen themselves on their successful careers, the place-hunters to display their orders and ribbons, the men of letters to relish the bubble of fame. A lot of good may these things do them! He looks down on them all with a superior smile, ironical, quite devoid of envy or greed. Stendhal's egotism is passionately on the defensive; he never poaches on others' preserves; at the same time he will not allow any to trespass in his sanctum. He builds a Chinese wall around his personality in order to exclude all alien influences, all possibility of the infiltration of others' thoughts, opinions, judgments; his privacy is not to be encroached upon by the common herd. His sole ambition is to keep Henri Beyle in a room apart, in a forcing-house where the rare plant of individuality may grow and blossom undisturbed. For Stendhal wishes his opinions, his inclinations, his delights, his ambitions, and his follies, to flourish for his own gratifications, for himself alone; it seems to him quite indifferent and imma-

terial to what extent a book or an event can be compared with another; he scornfully ignores how a thing may affect his contemporaries, or universal history, or, even, eternity. He describes as beautiful that only which appeals to him personally; he regards as right that only which at the moment he happens to deem suitable; he looks upon those things only as despicable which he himself despises. Nor is he in the least distressed to find himself alone in these opinions; on the contrary, solitude enheartens him, strengthens his self-esteem. "Que m'importent les autres!" Julien's motto will serve his turn equally well in matters of taste.

"But why," breaks in someone in unconscious reproof, "why use such a pompous word as egotism to describe this most readily understood of all readily understood things? Surely it is the most natural thing in the world to look upon that which we ourselves consider beautiful as beautiful, and to order one's life in accordance with what one deems the best?" Certainly matters ought to be like that. But who ever succeeds in keeping genuinely independent in feeling and in thought? Who, having ventured to express an opinion upon a book, a picture, an event, will have the courage to maintain it against the judgment of a whole epoch or a whole world in arms? We are all of us far more influenced by adverse opinion than we admit. We have to breathe the air of our own day into our lungs; our judgments and outlooks come into contact with countless other judgments and outlooks, acting and reacting upon us, blunting a point here, sharpening one there; the invisible waves of mass suggestion circulate through the ether. Man's natural reflex to all these outside influences is by no means self-assertion, but, rather, adaptation of his personal preferences to the

spirit of the time; he capitulates to the feeling of the majority. The whole mighty machine of human society would long ago have come to a standstill if the majority of men had not instinctively, or out of indolence, renounced personal and private opinions. It needs extraordinary energy, and a rebellious, austere, and aspiring courage (how few can boast of the gift!) to be able to withstand this overwhelming spiritual pressure. Rare qualities are needed if a man is to preserve his individuality intact. He must have a profound knowledge of the world, a quick and penetrating mind, a sovereign contempt for the crowd, a bold and amoral unscrupulousness, and, above all, courage, threefold courage, imperturbable courage to uphold his own convictions.

Stendhal was endowed with such courage, he, the egotist of egotists, the adept juggler, the master of the foil, wise with the wisdom of the serpent, "chevalier sans peur et sans reproche" in the defence of his own ego. It does one good to see how doughtily he attacks his own epoch, one against all; how with adroit feints and brusque sallies, with no other armour than his radiant pride, he fences with contemporary society for half a century, often pricked it is true, bleeding from many hidden wounds, but holding himself erect to the end, and never yielding an inch of his own individuality and his own headstrong will. Opposition is the very breath of life to him; independence his delight. There are a hundred examples to show how dauntlessly and impudently this fearless malcontent throws down the gauntlet, challenging public opinion to the fight. In an epoch when everyone is belauding war, when in France "the idea of heroism is inseparably connected with that of a drum-major," he describes Waterloo as an immense medley of chaotic

forces; he unblushingly acknowledges that he is bored to death during the Russian campaign, though historians in general are wont to extol this adventure as an epic of universal history; he is not ashamed to say that a journey to Italy where he hopes to see his beloved is more important than the fate of his country, and an aria by Mozart more interesting than a political crisis. "Il se fiche d'être conquis," he does not care a snap of the fingers if France is occupied by foreign armies; for, being by choice a European and a cosmopolitan, he does not bother about the mad freaks of fortune in war, about opinions which happen to be fashionable at the moment, about patriotism "le ridicule le plus sot," about nationalism et hoc genus omne. All he is interested in is the safeguarding and the realization of his own spiritual nature. The personal note is delicately predominant over the uproar of the cataclysm taking place around him, so that one often doubts when reading his diary whether he could really have lived during this eventful time. In a sense, Stendhal did not take part in any of these happenings, even when he was present on the battlefield or actually sitting in his official chair; he took part only in his own development. He is, therefore, as untrustworthy a witness to the world outside himself as he is a trustworthy witness to the world of his own personality. Rarely, indeed, has an artist lived more unflinchingly, more fundamentally, more fanatically for his own ego, rarely has he evolved a more perfect individual ego, than this heroic and confessed egotist.

Because of his jealously guarded seclusion, the essential Stendhal has come down to us undiminished and fragrant with his own peculiar aroma. Isolation preserves. Just as a fly is preserved in amber or a fern-frond is preserved as a fossil in a rock, so has Stendhal's essence

(thanks to the relentless aloofness of his egotism, which saved him from contact with the disturbing, promiscuous, and disintegrating forces of the epoch in which he lived) been preserved and handed down to us in all its pristine singularity. We recognize in him, "man" par excellence, the eternal individual, the rare and subtle exemplar psychologically complete—precisely because he did not allow himself to be coloured with the dyestuffs of his epoch. No other author's work in the French literature of his century, no other man of letters, has remained so fresh, so new, so intact. His books seem to be for all time, to be full of vitality, because, irrespective of what was going on around him, he lived his own life. A man may serve his fellows quite as effectively by safeguarding his personality from the world, as by sacrificing himself to the world. In so far as he safeguards his ego, he preserves a fragment of earthly truth from the destructive stream of change, a fragment which comes once only and is otherwise doomed to disappear. The more a man lives the life of his generation, the more likely is he to die when his generation passes away. The more a man lives within himself, is sufficient unto himself, so much the more likely is his memory to remain green.

THE ARTIST

A vrai dire, je ne suis moins que sûr d'avoir quelque talent pour me faire lire. Je trouve quelquefois beaucoup de plaisir à écrire. Voilà tout.

STENDHAL TO BALZAC

STENDHAL, the most jealous guardian of his ego yet known to literature, never gives himself up wholly to anything, neither to the world of men, nor to a profession, nor to an official post. When he writes books, be they novels or psychological studies, he either incorporates himself into these books or else the books go all awry. Even his passion for writing serves merely to gratify his own desires. Stendhal, who prides himself on never having done anything that did not please him personally, is an artist only so long as he can draw enjoyment from the occupation; he serves art only so long as art serves his ultimate purpose: his delight, his own specific pleasure. One would be tempted to call him dilettante, were it not that a disparaging sense now attaches to the word which once upon a time was used to denote a grand seigneur of the arts, one who from sheer joy, from genuine love, from delight, "diletto," and not from a desire for gain, chose art as his companion. They err, therefore, who imagine that because Stendhal has at length achieved a world-wide reputation, he himself ascribed an important place to his art. How indignant this fanatical devotee of independence would have been to find himself placed in the

ranks of the authors, to be counted among the professional men of letters! It is quite inconsonant with Stendhal's own wishes that so much pother should be made about his literary achievements. In his will he left special directions for having his tombstone engraved with the words: visse, scrisse, amò. But the order of the inscription has been arbitrarily reversed, so that we now read: scrisse, visse, amò. Stendhal was true to his own device: for him living was the primary, the most important thing; writing came after, was secondary merely. Enjoyment was more important than creation, his Self more important than his actions; the whole scribbling business was nothing more than an amusing complementary function of his development, one of the many means for avoiding boredom. He is grossly misjudged if other motives are ascribed to him: literature was for this enjoyer of life merely an incidental means for the objectifying of his personality, it was not in any way a fundamental method of self-expression.

As a stripling freshly arrived in Paris the idea had certainly crossed his mind that he would like to be a man of letters, and of course one who was to become celebrated. What youth of seventeen does not harbour such ambitions? He sharked up a few philosophical essays, began a play in verse which was never completed; but he put no ardour into his work, felt no real ambition. For fourteen years thereafter he completely forgot literature; he passed his days in the saddle or at the office, loafed on the boulevards, paid ineffectual court to the ladies, and was far more interested in painting and in music than in the penman's craft. In 1814, suffering from a momentary lack of funds, furious at having to sell his horse, he hastily put together a volume entitled *La vie de*

Haydn, large portions of the text being pilfered from the luckless Carpani. The Italian, when he discovered how arrantly he had been plundered, raised a great outcry against this "Monsieur Bombet." Nothing deterred, Beyle set to work on a history of Italian painting, which likewise owed most of its pages to other authors, interspersed with a few anecdotes from our hero's own pen. Partly because he was in urgent need of money, partly because it tickled his sense of humour to launch various pseudonyms for the world to puzzle its brains with, he continued the hoax, now appearing as a historian of art, now as a political economist (*D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels*), now as a literary critic (*Racine et Shakespeare*), and now as psychologist (*De l'amour*). These essays in the scrivener's craft reveal to him the fact that "writing is by no means so difficult." If one has a ready wit, if thoughts find quick expression through the lips, there is but a slight difference between writing and conversing; still slighter is the difference between speaking and dictating. Literary labours are not much more than a charming amusement. That he never troubles to place his real name on the title-page of his books is sufficient indication of his complete lack of ambition as an author. Though this "ancien officier de cavalerie" does not find the profession of letters beneath his dignity (indeed, he never values bourgeois respectability) yet authorship is not for him a matter of which an intelligent gentleman will boast, or one into which he will put much ardour. In actual fact, so long as Henri Beyle has a post and regular supplies of cash, he troubles very little about the writer, Stendhal, and tucks the latter away into a corner of his life.

When he is forty years of age he sets himself seriously to the task of authorship. Why? Because he has become

more ambitious? More passionate? More in love with art? Nothing of the sort! He has become more corpulent, that's all; he is more at ease sitting at a writing-table than in the saddle; he is less attractive to women, alas, has less money, and considerably more time on his hands; in a word, he needs a derivative "pour se désennuyer." Just as his sometime thick and bushy hair has been replaced by a wig, so the novel, the romance, must play the part of substitute for real life; he must compensate himself for the decrease in authentic adventures by the creation of fictitious ones. In the end, he comes to find writing an agreeable occupation, and to discover in himself a pleasanter and more intelligent conversational partner than all the frequenters of salons put together. Yes, the writing of novels is a very jolly, cleanly, noble form of enjoyment—so long, of course, as one does not take it too seriously and soil one's fingers with sweat and ambition as those Parisian fellows are wont to do. Literature is a pursuit worthy of an egotist, is an elegant and unfettered outlet for the intelligence; and Stendhal takes increasing delight in it as he gets older. Besides it does not require much exertion; a novel can be dictated in three months or so. There is, of course, the added amusement of making fun of one's enemies under cover of an assumed name, and of pillorying society for its vulgarity; one can reveal the most delicate sensations of the soul, without having to stomach the inane smiles of fools, inasmuch as such feelings can always be fathered on to one of the characters in the novel. One can permit oneself to be passionate without compromising oneself; and, though old age is so near, one can allow oneself to dream like a boy without having to feel ashamed. Thus Stendhal begins to take pleasure in creation, and authorship gradually becomes

his most private and intimate form of self-gratification. But it never occurs to him that he is making a great contribution to the world of art, is making a niche for himself in the history of literature. "Je parlais de choses que j'adore et je n'avais jamais pensé à l'art de faire un roman," he confesses to Balzac. He gives no thought to form, or to the critics, the public, the newspapers, or eternity; all he is concerned with is his own pleasure. Quite late in life, when he is close upon fifty, he happens upon a strange discovery; there is money in books, not much, but enough to make a man independent, to safeguard him from having to rub shoulders with the herd, to rescue him from a subordinate position in which he is forced to give an account of his actions to a bureaucrat. This is enough to spur him forward, for the highest ideals of Henri Beyle's life are solitude and independence.

His books were not a striking success. The public was not used to having its mental food presented in so cut-and-dried a fashion, lacking the spice of oily sentimentality. In addition to creating the persons of the novel, Stendhal had to create a public which would read his books, an élite, "the happy few," as he himself expressed it; but this public did not arise till a generation later, in the nineties of the nineteenth century. The indifference of his contemporaries left Stendhal cold; he despised them too much to worry about their opinions. In any case, his books are so many letters addressed to himself; experiments in sensation, written to expand his own being, to develop to the full the spiritual, intellectual, and scientific capacities of the person he loved best on earth, Henri Beyle. Has he, the timid and obese Henri Beyle, been scorned of women? Very well; in his books he can live

in a waking dream, present himself as a handsome stripling like Julien and Fabrice, boldly uttering the words of love he never ventured to utter in reality. Do the blockheads at the Foreign Office deprive him of the possibility for playing the diplomatist? He can compensate himself for the stupidity of his chiefs by showing his capacity for intrigue, his Machiavellism, his cleverness in threading his way through labyrinthine complications; he can indemnify himself by pillorying the silly fools in effigy, by subjecting them to his condemnation and mockery. There is a note of fervency in the descriptions of the places he loves so well; he recalls the unforgettable days spent at Milan; soon he discovers the sublime pleasure, while still remaining shut away and isolated, of bringing his lonely ego into contact with the world—a world, be it understood, which is not so common and vulgar as the real world, but one which is more consonant with his own tastes, a world more impassioned, more vehement, wiser, brighter, and more untrammelled. "Que m'importent les autres?" Stendhal writes for himself alone. The aging epicurean has discovered a new and subtle form of amusement: by the light of two candles on a plain deal table, in a garret, to write or to dictate. Towards the close of his life, this intimate communing with his own soul becomes more important to him than women and other pleasures, than Café Foys and discussions in the salons; it even surpasses music. Enjoyment in solitude and the solitude of enjoyment, his earliest ideal, is at length realized by him when he reaches fifty, and the realization secures expression in art.

A joy which came tardily, it is true, a joy coloured by the rays of the setting sun and partly hidden by the clouds of resignation. For Stendhal's literary creation started too

late to influence his life; it merely served as a musical accompaniment to the slow process of physical dissolution. He was forty-three when he began to write his first novel —*Le Rouge et le Noir* (for an earlier romance, *Armance*, is too slight to be taken seriously into consideration); at fifty, he wrote *Lucien Leuwen;* at fifty-four, *La Chartreuse de Parme*. Three novels are his whole literary accomplishment, three variations on one and the same original and elementary theme: the spiritual history of Henri Beyle's youth, a story the aging Beyle does not wish to see perish and must therefore continually renew. All three might bear the same title as the one adopted by Flaubert (who was born much later than Beyle, and was one of his most ardent detractors), *L'éducation sentimentale*, the education of the emotions.

The three young men—Julien, the ill-used son of a peasant, Fabrice, the pampered nobleman, and Lucien Leuwen, the son of a banker—are all born into a chill world, but they enter life with glowing hearts and immense idealism, are enthusiastic admirers of Napoleon, worship everything that is heroic and great and free. In the superabundance of their feeling, they seek a something better, a something more spiritual, a something more inspired than the actualities of life. All three bring a perplexed mind, and a pure heart filled with restrained passion, to lay at the feet of womankind; each is filled with the romanticism of youth unspotted as yet through contact with the common and calculating world of every day. Yet for each in turn comes a rude awakening, the terrible discovery that in a frozen and hostile environment the fires of the heart must be smothered, enthusiasm denied expression, the real self disguised. Their chivalrous impetus breaks against the mob mind of an

epoch immersed in money making, against the meanness and the poltroonery of "those others" (Stendhal's pet aversions!). Little by little they learn the tricks and dodges of their opponents, cleverness in intrigue, artful calculations; they become crafty, deceitful, cold men of the world. Or, worse still, they become knowing; as calculating and egotistic as Stendhal is in middle age; they become brilliant diplomatists, business geniuses, superlative bishops; in a word, they come to terms with reality and adapt themselves to their surroundings as soon as they feel that they have been thrust forth from their true spiritual world, the world of youth and genuine idealism.

In the sixth decade of his life, Henri Beyle sets himself to the writing of these novels, that he may gather the three young men around him; or, rather, that he himself may relive "sa vie à vingt ans," may passionately relive his youth, his youth when he harboured such shy, reserved, and glowing feelings within his breast, when he had such implicit faith in the world. Only when he himself has become informed, cool-headed, and disillusioned does he tell the story of his heart as a young man, does he portray the everlasting romance of the "beginning." Thus these novels unite in a wonderful manner the fundamental contrasts of his character, unite the lucidity of age with the noble perplexity of youth. Stendhal's lifelong struggle of spirit with feeling, of realism with romanticism, is at last liquidated in three unforgettable battles, each one of them as memorable as Marengo, Austerlitz, and Waterloo.

These three young men, though they experience different destinies and are of varying races and characters, are nevertheless brothers in the realm of feeling: their creator has endowed them all with his own romanticism,

and has given this to them that they may develop it. There is the same tie uniting the three men into whom they grow up: Conte Mosca, Leuwen the banker, and Comte de la Môle; they are all Beyle himself, the intellectualist who has crystallized into pure spirit, the man who has become wise, out of whom every vestige of idealism has been burned by the fires of reason. These transfigurations are symbolical representations of what life makes of the young; they show us how the "exalté en tout genre se dégoute et s'éclaire peu à peu," as Henri Beyle writes of his own life. Heroic enthusiasm is dead, magical intoxication is replaced by a sad superiority of tactic and practice, and elemental passion has to yield to a cold pleasure in the game of life. The three men end by ruling the world; Conte Mosca in his principality, Leuwen on the stock exchange, Comte de la Môle in the realm of diplomacy; but they do not love the marionettes which dance to their pulling of the strings; they are full of scorn, because they know all the pitiable meannesses of their fellow mortals. They have not lost the power of appreciating beauty, have not ceased to thrill responsively to heroism; but the appreciation and the thrill remain in the realm of feeling, and can no longer be translated into action. Gladly enough would they exchange their worldly achievements for the obscure, confused yearnings of youth—which, though it has achieved nothing, can dream of achieving all. Just as Antonio Montecalino, the shrewd, dispassionate, and calculating aristocrat, contrasts with Torquato Tasso, the young and ardent poet, so do these men of maturer years, for whom daily life has become a matter of plain prose, contrast with the young men they themselves once were. Maturity contemplates youth with mixed feelings: would fain be help-

ful, and is none the less hostile; is somewhat contemptuous, and yet is moved to envy. It is the old antithesis between brain and heart, between the waking man and the dreamer.

Stendhal's universe oscillates between these two poles of human destiny, between the boy's vague yearning after beauty and the man's positive will-to-power, a will touched with irony. It is between the vicissitudes of manhood, between age and youth, between maturity and romanticism, that the surging current of feeling finds vent. Women confront these striplings, who though shy are burning with desire; women, by the music of their goodness, assuage the torment of unfulfilled craving. They provide a pure and glowing outlet for youthful passion, these women of Stendhal's, noble in character one and all, Madame de Rênal, Madame de Chasteller, La Duchezza di Sanseverina. But not even this hallowed surrender can preserve the young men's pristine purity of soul, for at every step forward into life they plunge deeper into the morass of human baseness. Here again we have a contrast. These heroic and aspiring women, capable of providing the spirit of youth with wings, are contraposed to the commonplace world of reality and of practical life, to the cunning and crafty brood of petty intrigues and placehunters, to mankind as Stendhal sees it through the spectacles of his contempt. In retrospect he contemplates these women with the eyes of his youth, and glorifies them, for even as an elderly man he is still in love with love; taking them gently by the hand, he leads these adorable idols forth from the most secret haven of his heart, and presents them to his heroes. At the same time, with all the vigour of his pent-up wrath, he thrusts the baser wretches down into the shambles. Out of offal and fire

he creates his judges, his lawyers, his pettifogging ministers, his parade-ground officers, his chatterers of the salons; and all these creatures, sticky and malleable as mud, all these nullities, increase and multiply till they become the great majority of mankind, and succeed (as is ever the way on earth) in crushing the sublime. Throughout Stendhal's works, the tragical melancholy of an incurable enthusiast goes hand in hand with the keen-bladed irony of a disillusioned man. In his novels Stendhal depicts the world of reality with a hatred no less strong than the glowing passion with which he paints the world of his fancy; he is as great a master in the one field as in the other; he belongs to two worlds and is equally at home in either, whether it be the world of the intellect or that of the feelings.

Stendhal's novels probably owe a good deal of their charm and distinction to the fact that they are the product of a man in his maturity, a man whose memories are still fresh and whose survey of events has been well pondered before setting it to paper, whose writing is youthful in sentiment and impregnated with a wise deliberation as far as the thoughts are concerned. Distance alone is capable of imparting a creative interpretation to the meaning and the beauty of each passion. Does not Stendhal himself write: "Un homme dans les transports de la passion ne distingue pas les nuances"; a man cannot know the origin or the limits of his sensations? He may be able to voice his ecstasy in lyrical and hymnal form, sending it forth into limitless space; but he cannot, in the moment of passion, explain the ecstatic rapture and give it epic expression. Analysis demands clearness of vision, cool blood, alert understanding, a position which is above the passionate; it needs a certain lapse of time since the event,

and a steady pulse so that the hand of the sculptor may not tremble. In his novels, Stendhal displays to a supreme degree all these requisites, both internal and external. He, the artist arrived at the boundary line which separates the rise from the fall in a man's life, consciously and knowledgeably portrays the world of the feelings; he recaptures the emotions of the past, understands them, and is able to bring them into the daylight, to express them while keeping them within due bounds. Stendhal's greatest delight, the impulse which urges him to the task of writing these novels, is the opportunity it affords him to contemplate this inner world of his revived emotions.

The outward husk, the technique of novel writing, is of little importance to our artist; he improvises as he goes along. Indeed, having come to the end of a chapter, he has no idea what is to happen in the following. The episodes are not always compatible with the characters, and Goethe, who was one of the first to read Stendhal with appreciation, did not fail to point this out. In a word, the melodramatic side of the stories could have been concocted by Mr. Anybody. Stendhal is a genuine literary creator only in the passionate moments experienced by his heroes. His writings have artistic worth and vitality only insofar as they depict the inner currents of life. They are at their most beautiful where one feels that the author has spiritually participated; they are incomparable where Stendhal's own shy and reticent soul is allowed to speak through the words and deeds of his favourites, where he allows his characters to suffer on account of the cleavage within his own nature. The description of the battle of Waterloo in the *Chartreuse de Parme* is a masterly résumé of the years he spent in Italy as a youth. Just as Stendhal himself had been drawn to Italy, so his

Julien is attracted to Napoleon, hoping to find upon the battlefields that spirit of heroism which he feels to be astir within his own soul. But the rude hand of reality tears the veils from his idealistic concept. Instead of clashing cavalry charges he experiences the senseless confusion of modern warfare; instead of the Grande Armée, he finds a rout of men fleeing before the foe; instead of heroes, he encounters cynical soldiers, as mediocre and second-rate in their fine uniforms as dozens of other men in drab coats. These disillusionments are limned with marvellous insight. No other artist has succeeded in depicting with such intimacy of touch the way in which the ecstasy of the soul is again and again bruised upon the rock of hard reality, until at length, too weary to rise, it resigns itself to its defeat. Stendhal's psychological genius triumphs precisely in those moments when the senses and the brain generate electric sparks through contact one with another, and when the two opposites in his disposition meet. He excels himself as an artist only when he makes his characters experience what he himself has experienced, and his portrayals are complete only when he is in perfect spiritual accord with his creations. His art, too, therefore, is autobiographical, and discloses the most intimate secrets of his personal life. "Quand il était sans émotion, il était sans esprit."

Yet strangely enough it is this quality of sympathetic understanding which Stendhal is at most pains to conceal. He is ashamed lest some casual reader shall detect how much of himself has gone to the making of Julien, Lucien, and Fabrice. No one must ever guess that his soul has been breathed into these imaginary beings. Stendhal, therefore, adopts the style of the dispassionate chronicler, of the police-court recorder: "Je fais tous les efforts pour

être sec." He would have been nearer the truth had he written: "pour paraître sec." One must indeed be dull of perception not to detect behind this "dryness" the emotional participation of the author. Stendhal, so full of passion, is never cold in his writing. In truth he is an impassioned novelist, if ever a novelist was impassioned. But his passion is deliberately kept out of sight. Just as in daily life he is desperately concerned lest he shall "laisser deviner ses sentiments," so in his writings he tries to conceal his emotion beneath a veil of assumed impassivity. He refuses to wear his heart upon his sleeve, for nothing is more distasteful to him than the public display of emotion; his sense of spiritual discretion makes him shrink away in disgust from the man who tells his story in a voice choked with tears; he loathes the guttural "ton déclamatoire" of a Chateaubriand, who transfers the bombastic mouthings of the boards into the realm of literature. Better by far to appear hard than "larmoyant," better be lacking in art than become pathetic, better be logical rather than lyrical!

Stendhal therefore chews his every word to exhaustion before he spits it out into the world, and in order to acquire the style of his desire he assiduously cons the bourgeois code ere he sets himself to work in the morning. Nevertheless, dryness is far from being Stendhal's ideal. With his "amour exagéré de la logique," he aims at making his style as inconspicuous as possible so as not to obscure the vividness of his picture: "Le style doit être comme un vernis transparent: il ne doit pas altérer les couleurs ou les faits et pensées sur lesquels il est placé." The mere words are not to obtrude themselves upon our notice by assuming the lyrical form, the coloratura, the "fiorituri" of Italian opera. On the contrary, the

words must play second fiddle to the events and thoughts, or, to change the metaphor, they must, like a well-tailored suit, fit the situation so becomingly that they are forgotten, and only the spiritual movements they clothe find palpable expression. Clarity is Stendhal's chief aim. His Gallic instinct for lucidity makes him abhor everything which savours of muddleheadedness, of sentimentality, of pomposity, of turgescence: above all he dislikes that succulent sentimentalism which Rousseau introduced into French literature. Stendhal wants precision and truth to be part of every feeling, even the most confused; he wants clarity to penetrate into the labyrinthine ways of the heart. "Ecrire" spells for him "anatomiser," that is to say the dissection of every sensation into its component parts, the measurement of heat in degrees, the examination of the emotions with clinical accuracy as though they were an illness. In art, as in life, the only thing which bears no fruit is vagueness, confusion of thought. One who befuddles himself with emotion sinks into the quagmire of his own feelings. While he is sleeping off the fumes of intoxication, he misses the highest, the most spiritual form of enjoyment: consciousness of enjoyment. But he who plumbs his own depths with clearness of vision is able to relish these same depths, to contemplate them with manly and genuine appreciation. While realizing the confusion of his feelings he can simultaneously recognize their beauty. Thus Stendhal is fond of putting into practice the old Persian precept which tells us to ponder with the waking mind that which the ecstatic heart betrays in moments of passionate exaltation. He is at once the most blissful servant of the soul, and yet, by his clear-cut logic, he remains master of his emotions.

To know his own heart; by understanding, to enhance

the mystery of the emotions because one has fathomed them—such is Stendhal's formula. The children of his fancy, his heroes, feel just as he feels. They, too, have no wish to be fooled, to be swept off their feet by emotion, but would fain keep watch over their feelings, hearken to them, plumb them, analyse them; they want to understand their emotions as well as to feel them. No phase, no mutation, is allowed to escape their vigilance; they test themselves to see whether their emotions are genuine or false, whether some other, still deeper feeling does not lie concealed behind. They are statisticians of their own hearts, alert and unsentimental observers of their own sentiments. They are continually asking themselves: "Do I love her already? Do I still love her? What did I feel then and why don't I feel the same now? Is my affection genuine or is it feigned? Am I merely play-acting where she is concerned?" They keep their fingers upon the pulse of their emotions and are instantly aware when excitement quickens the beat. Their self-scrutiny mercilessly confronts their self-surrender; with the precision of an insensate machine they reckon up the expenditure of feeling. In the very moment of rapturous fulfilment they pause to consider; "pensait-il" and "disait-il à soi-même," constantly crop up to impede the restless movement of the story. Every stretch of the muscles, every twitch of the nerves, is commented upon with the accuracy of a physicist or a physiologist. These peculiarities endow them all with the typical Stendhalian cleavage of character: they enthusiastically calculate their sensations, and with cool deliberation they make up their minds to experience an emotion just as if it were a business affair.

As an example I will cite the well known love scene in

Rouge et le Noir. Here, in the very article of ecstasy, when the maiden he loves is about to give herself to him, Julien remains fully intellectualized, painfully wide-awake. He is risking his life in order, at one o'clock at night, to visit Mademoiselle de la Môle. To reach her, he has had to place a ladder near the open window of her mother's bedroom. Surely passion, the spirit of romance, should be supreme? But the critical intelligence is still dominant! "Julien was much perplexed, he was at a loss what to do, he felt not the smallest particle of love. In his bewilderment he thought it incumbent upon him to be bold, and he therefore made to embrace her. 'Fie!' said she, thrusting him away. Her repulse pleased him immensely. He hastened to cast a glance around the room." Thus intellectually conscious, thus cool and deliberate in thought, are Stendhal's heroes even at the height of their most daring adventures. Let us follow the scene to its close; let us see how, after all the reflections and meditations in the midst of the lovers' excitement, the young maid gives herself to her father's secretary. "Mathilde found it hard to address him with the familiar 'thou,' and, when she did, the word lacked tenderness and therefore gave Julien no pleasure. He was amazed to find that he had as yet no sensation of happiness. In order that he might experience this emotion he took refuge in deliberation, reminding himself that he was in the good graces of a young girl who was, in general, chary of her praise. The reflection brought him happiness, for it gratified his vanity." What are her thoughts meanwhile? "I must talk to him. One is supposed to talk to a lover." To paraphrase Gloster, did ever man and woman woo one another in such a vein? What other writer has ventured to allow his characters to control themselves, to calculate their actions with such

composure, in circumstances of high tension? And Stendhal's characters are by no means persons of a fishy disposition!

Here we approach the innermost technique of his psychological exposition, a technique which smothers the fires and disintegrates feeling into its impulses. Stendhal never contemplates an emotion as an entity, but always as a compost of innumerable details; he examines its crystallizations under a lens. That which in the realm of reality takes place suddenly, in one spasmodic movement, is divided by his analytical mind into infinitesimal molecules of time; he shows us a slow-motion picture of the psychical actions, and thus permits us to comprehend them with greater intellectual accuracy. The events in Stendhal's novels take place almost entirely upon the psychical plane, and not in the earthly realm of time and space; they occur, not so much in the lists of objective reality, as in the tumultuous region of the nerves that interconnect heart and brain. Art for the first time is used as an instrument for the elucidation of unconscious functional action. *Le Rouge et le Noir* begins the series of the "roman expérimental," which is later to bring the science of psychology so closely into contact with imaginative writing. We are not surprised to find that Stendhal's contemporaries did not regard this newfangled art as art at all. On the contrary, they looked upon it as antipoetical, as a grossly mechanical and materialistic probing of the soul. Balzac, for instance, had something like a monomania for the study of the impulses, but he regarded them as unified, as integral. Stendhal, on the other hand, put them under the microscope, that he might examine the tiny germs, the true exciters of the strange disease known as love. Doubtless such elaborate methods impede the ve-

hement course of the action, and many passages in Stendhal's works savour of laboratory sobriety, of the dispassionateness of the schoolroom. Nevertheless, Stendhal's furor artisticus is quite as creative as is Balzac's, though the former casts his into a logical mould, fanatically seeking after clarity, and displaying a determination to attain clairvoyance of the soul. His depiction of the world is no more than a medium for the comprehension of the soul; his portrayal of men is merely a preliminary essay for his portrait of himself. Stendhal, the arch-egoist, dispenses passion only that it may return to himself in a stronger and wiser form; he seeks to know mankind in order the better to know himself. "Art for art's sake," the objective delight in presentation, the discovery and the creation of personages for the sheer pleasure in the doing, was neither known to nor practised by Stendhal. Such were his limitations! This master of spiritual autoeroticism, this most self-absorbed of artists, was never able to merge himself wholeheartedly into the world-all, to throw wide his arms and exclaim: "Come, soul of the universe, and penetrate my being through and through." He was incapable of any such ecstatic self-abnegation. In spite of his amazing artistic penetration he was never, not in one single instance, able to understand the art of another man of letters when such an author drew his inspiration, not from the purely human, but from the primal sources of the cosmos—from chaos. The titanic, any Cosmic emotion, any thought of being merged with the universe—these were terrifying to Stendhal. Rembrandt, Beethoven, Goethe, beauty that was stormy or belonged to the sombre realms of thought, these things were a closed book to him. His crystal-clear intelligence could apprehend beauty only when it presented itself

in the Apollonian art, the luminous serenity, of a Mozart and a Cimarosa, whose melodies are clear as spring water; or of a Rafael and a Guido Reni whose pictures are so engagingly simple and easy to understand. The mystery and suffering of the world, Dionysian art, mighty, strenuous, violently destructive, driven onward by daimonic forces, such art was beyond his ken. Nothing in the vast universe held his interest save the human factor; and that human factor consisted, in the last resort, of the microcosm called Stendhal.

To fathom this one entity he became a man of letters; he created characters in order to portray himself. Although genius made him a supreme artist, Stendhal never served art; he made use of art as a delicate and responsive instrument whereby he could measure the rapturous flight of the spirit and express this flight in the music of his prose. Art was never a goal for him, it was always a road leading to his one and only goal: the discovery of his ego, the joy of self-knowledge.

DE VOLUPTATE PSYCHOLOGICA

Ma véritable passion est celle de connaître et d'éprouver. Elle n'a jamais été satisfaite.

A WORTHY cit, meeting Stendhal at a social function, asked him what profession he practised. A quizzical smile puckered Henri's mouth, his little eyes sparkled and glinted impudently, as with assumed modesty he replied: "Je suis observateur du cœur humain." Ironical? Of course! The delight in poking fun at a defenceless bourgeois! And yet behind the bantering words there is a considerable morsel of truth, for in very fact Stendhal devoted the best of his energies to the observation of spiritual happenings; nothing else absorbed his interest as did the passion "de voir l'intérieur des cerveaux." He ranks among the greatest psychologists of all time, among the experts in the topography of the soul, and may be acclaimed the Copernicus of the astronomy of the heart. Nevertheless, Stendhal may well be ironical when he declares that he is a psychologist by profession. For when we speak of "profession," we imply something to which we devote ourselves entirely, a special and purposive activity. Now Stendhal's psychological investigations were never purposive or didactic; they were always casual and ambulatory, made for his own amusement as he sauntered along through life. At the risk of appearing over-insistent, I must repeat that one who should ascribe any kind of earnestness in labour, any rigorous precision, any

emotional or moral purpose to Stendhal, grossly misjudges his character. Sentiment alone was the motive power of this gossamer-like creature of enjoyment, who had taken as his devicè: "L'unique affaire de la vie est le plaisir." He never propounded complicated systems, he never made or observed any rule of life; on the contrary, he was a dilettante in the original sense of the word, a man wholly absorbed in that which brought him pleasure, without aim and without constraint.

He does not surrender himself to the claims of the work of art with the devotion of a Baudelaire or a Flaubert. When he creates a character, it is the better to enjoy the world, and himself as reflected therein. Similarly, if he goes travelling it is not that he may, like Humboldt, make a careful exploration of the lands he visits; he sets forth in the tourist vein, as a wayfarer enjoying the landscape, the national customs, the women. Again, he is never a psychologist in the professorial sense of the term, he never practises the art of psychology as his main purpose in life, never throws himself into the examination of phenomena with the painful conscientiousness of a Nietzsche or with the distressing remorse of a Tolstoy. Like art, knowledge is for him no more than the cerebral form of enjoyment, and he does not love it as a task but as the most ingenious kind of plaything for the intellect. For this very reason there is always an undertone of joyfulness in every one of his inclinations and pursuits, something spontaneously musical, something jocund and soaring, something buoyant and fiercely avid like a tongue of flame. He must not be compared with the German professor who patiently and laboriously worries his way through to the primeval world, nor with such a keen huntsman as Pascal (or, once more, Nietzsche), who,

thirsty and eager, pursued every phenomenon to its lair. Stendhal's thought-process is full of the champagne of life, is a human craving to know, a light and effervescent intoxication of the nerves; it is that genuine and rare kind of inquisitiveness known as voluptas psychologica.

Few have been more under the spell of this passion for psychological investigation. With all writers of an intellectual bent, it is a master passion; with Stendhal it became almost an obsession. How fine a flair he has for the secrets of the heart, how exhilarating is his psychological insight! Here curiosity, with its sensitive and discerning probe, explores the inner recesses of the heart, and then with subtle lasciviousness extracts the spiritual sap from the living things. His elastic intelligence does not need to come to grips with phenomena; he does not crush them to a pulp in order to fit them to the Procrustes' bed of a preconceived system. All his analyses have the unexpected and delightful fragrance of sudden discoveries, the freshness and cheerfulness of chance encounters. In spite of his virile and aristocratic appetite for the chase, he is too proud to pursue the quarry in heat and sweat, to track it down with a pack of arguments till it stands at bay; he is revolted at the unsavoury task of disembowelling the facts, and, like an aruspex of old, groping among the entrails of the victims. His sensitive perceptions, his delicate organ of touch, make it unnecessary for him to seize æsthetic values roughly in his grasp. The aroma of things, the pellucid aura of their essence, the ethereal radiance of their spirituality, are enough to inform this epicurean genius as to their meaning, and to disclose to him the mysteries of their inner substance; the tiniest movement causes him to feel, the merest anecdote tears away the veils of history, an aphorism is enough to

explain a man. The most elusive and intangible detail, "un raccourci," the rapidest of glances, opens a way for him into the very core of things. He knows that the observation of these "petits faits vrais" is of supreme importance in the realm of psychology. "Il n'y a d'originalité et de vérité que dans les détails," says Leuwen the banker; and Stendhal extols the methods of a generation which was "quite rightly, devoted to detail work." Thus was he foreshadowing our own time, the epoch of those who are no longer content to study psychology upon the foundation of broad and nebulous hypotheses, but minutely examine both the bodily and the spiritual foundations of the mind—investigating the former in the cellular anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, and the latter in the actual workings of the psyche, always with close attention to detail. At the very time when Kant's disciples together with Schelling, Hegel, e tutti quanti, on the imposing eminence of their professorial platforms, were juggling the world-all into their college caps, this one man, Stendhal, spurred forward by his autoeroticism, had, by a brilliant flash of insight, come to the realization that the day of huge philosophical dreadnoughts, of giant systems, was over and done with.

How tremendously Stendhal is in advance of his contemporaries! He outstrips all the psychologists of his day, simply because his mind is not loaded with a mass of ready-made hypotheses; he is a franc-tireur who has no wish to conquer or to subjugate: "je ne blâme ni approuve, j'observe"; he is one who pursues knowledge for the fun of the thing, for his own personal gratification. Like Novalis, his spiritual brother, he cares to catch only the "pollen-grains" of knowledge, chance-blown, wafted to him by the breeze, but instinct with the innermost

meaning of the organic world, reproductive elements, tiny germs charged with invincible potentialities. Only in the scrutiny of the infinitesimally small, in the observation of the fleeting moment when feeling begins, does Stendhal sense the intimate conjunction of body and soul which scholars have named "the enigma of the world."

Thus it is that at the first approach his psychology appears to be no more than a petty art, a play with subtleties. In his novels and elsewhere, Stendhal's discoveries, his opinions and outlooks, seem to do no more than "effleurer les choses"; nevertheless he is convinced that an exact observation, be it never so insignificant, is of far greater value to the understanding of the world of feeling than any theory. "Le cœur se fait moins sentir que comprendre." Just as an attack of fever can be registered by the tiny movements of mercury in a clinical thermometer, so must one be able to read the mutations of the soul as they find expression in the most inconspicuous symptoms. Psychology has no trustworthy means of penetrating into the dark abysses, except the utilization of these chance revelations of the feelings. "Il n'y a de sûrement vrai que les sensations." One need but devote a lifetime to the contemplation of five or six ideas, and already certain laws begin to take shape (nothing dictatorial of course, only of interest to the individual); and these laws assume an aspect of a spiritual orderliness, whose comprehension or mere foreshadowing is the joy and the passion of every genuine psychologist.

Innumerable are the minute and helpful observations we owe to Stendhal; they are concise and unique discoveries which have, since his day, become axiomatic; indeed, they form the starting-point of any serious investigation of the emotional and intellectual world. Stendhal himself

lays no store by his discoveries. He throws his coruscating ideas on paper higgledy-piggledy without a thought of expounding them systematically. These fertile seeds are strewn with a lavish hand in his letters and diaries and novels, scattered haphazard at the moment they are found, and left to be discovered as fate decrees. His whole psychological output is contained in from ten to twenty dozen sentences and in his novels. He rarely gives himself the trouble to collect them, to order them consecutively, to round them into a theoretical whole. Even the monograph on love is nothing more than a pot-pourri of fragments, sentences, and anecdotes. He does not call his treatise "L'amour," but, treading warily, christens it "De l'amour." He deduces no more than the sketchiest of principles whereon to found his ideas, dividing love into "amour-passion," "amour-physique," "amour-goût," and so forth. Or he roughs in a theory concerning love's coming and its disappearance, a pencil sketch (in very fact, he wrote his book in pencil). He confines himself to hints, to suppositions, to noncommittal hypotheses, which he intersperses with amusing anecdotes—for Stendhal had no wish to pose as a profound intelligence, as one who thinks matters out to their logical conclusion, as one who presumes to do the thinking for others; he never follows up a chance discovery.

The solid work of application, of sifting, of upbuilding, is nonchalantly left by this tourist in the Europe of the soul to the draymen and the billstickers of psychology, to those who are fond of labour; and, indeed, a whole generation of Frenchmen has elaborated the themes to which he had so lightheartedly improvised the preludes. Dozens of psychological novels have been written around his famous theory of the crystallization of love, a theory

which compares the awakening of love to the sudden appearance of crystals in a supersaturated solution when certain appropriate physical conditions are supplied ("le rameau de Salzbourg"). Again, Stendhal's casual reference to the influence exercised by race and environment upon the development of the artist gave Taine the clue for his ponderous hypothesis and was the foundation of his philosophical celebrity. Stendhal, however, the incurable do-nothing, the genius of improvisation, never develops his psychological discoveries beyond the fragmentary stage; he contents himself with voicing them in aphorisms, thus following in the footsteps of his predecessors, Pascal, Chamfort, La Rochefoucauld, and Vauvenargues. He does not trouble to find out whether others have forestalled him, any more than he considers the possibility of his successors plagiarizing from himself: he just thinks and observes as naturally, with as little effort, as he breathes and speaks and writes. The idea of founding a school, of proselytizing, of having disciples, never crossed his mind: scrutinizing and again scrutinizing, cogitating and again cogitating, this was joy enough for him. Thinking, like all the other elementary human activities, was for him a simple pleasure, to be lavishly enjoyed.

Stendhal owes his supreme position as a psychologist to the fact that he practises the science as an art and not as a profession. Like Nietzsche, he is not only a bold thinker, but at times a most charmingly impudent one; he is strong enough and audacious enough to play with truth, and to love knowledge with a devotion bordering on the voluptuous. For Stendhal's intelligence is not merely the product of his brain, but is interpenetrated with the vital substances of his whole being. Warm-blooded sensuousness, the spice of irony, the acerbity of bitter experience,

and a pungent mischievousness, all go to the composition of his intelligence; one is conscious of the presence of a soul which has sunned itself in the light of many heavens, has drunk of the winds from many worlds; of a being who has absorbed all the wealth of a universe and yet, even at fifty years of age, is not filled to satiety, but is still eager for more. He is overflowing with vitality, effervescent and sparkling like champagne; and yet his aphoristic sayings are no more than the bubbles at the brim. The rarest treasures are carefully guarded within the goblet which is himself, and which death alone can shatter.

His psychology has none of the precision which is the asset of a well-tutored brain; it is the concentrated essence of an existence, the thought-substance of a veritable man. It is this which makes his truths appear so truthful; his insight so penetrating; his cognitions so universally applicable, and, above all, so unique and so enduring. No amount of intellectual assiduity in thinking can grasp the living reality with such sensuous comprehensiveness as can the spontaneous delight in thinking, the untroubled mental audacity of a sovereign nature. The purposeful becomes petrified in the purpose, the temporal in the time. Ideas and theories are like the shades in the Hades of Homer. They are nothing more than empty reflection until they have drunk the blood of men. Then they acquire voice and form; then they are able to converse with men.

SELF-PORTRAITURE

Qu'ai-je été? Que suis-je? Je serais bien embarrassé de le dire.

STENDHAL was his own master in the art of self-portraiture. And what a consummate artist he was in this field! He once said: "Pour connaître l'homme il suffit de s'étudier soi-même: pour connaître les hommes il faut les pratiquer." To which he hastened to add that he knew men only from books and had never studied anyone except himself. Stendhal invariably took himself as starting-point for his psychological investigations; and his conclusions returned upon himself. But the path encircling this one individual takes him round an orbit embracing the whole expanse of the human psyche.

In earliest childhood he made his preliminary essays in the art of self-observation. The premature death of his dearly loved mother left the little boy forlorn in a hostile and alien world. He had to conceal and deny the impulses of his heart, thus acquiring early in life "the slave's art" of lying. Crouching in a corner, silent, reserved, he would eye these rough and bigoted provincials among whom he seemed to be a fish out of water; he would take stock of his father, his aunt, his tutor, his tormentors, those placed in authority over him, and hatred would sharpen his faculties of perception. Loneliness invariably makes a man more observant of himself and others. Thus already as a child he schooled himself to attention, to act the detective; he cultivated all the wiles

of the subjugated, all the "slavish tricks" of the dependent who is for ever trying to slip through the meshes of the net which has captured him; he sought out people's weaknesses in order to profit by them; in a word he became an adept in psychology because he was misunderstood and because he needed a shield for his own protection.

His second course in psychology lasted till the end of his life. Love and women were his training college. Stendhal is the last to hide the melancholy fact that he was no hero as a lover, no conqueror; least of all a Don Juan, whose mantle he would fain have assumed. Mérimée tells us that, as far as he knew, Stendhal was always in love, and, unfortunately, nearly always unhappy in his passion. "Mon attitude générale était celle d'un amant malheureux," he admits, and goes on to say that few officers in Napoleon's army had possessed so small a number of women as he. Yet he had inherited from his parents, from his broad-shouldered father and his warm-blooded mother, a goodly store of sensuality, "un tempérament de feu," and women were a perpetual fascination to him. He once asked a comrade how best he could proceed in order to win a woman's love. "Ayez-la d'abord," was the answer. But how, he asked himself, can one be sure that she is "haveable"? He was at pains to carry about his person an infallible prescription as to how to overcome a woman's "virtue," a document furnished him by a brother officer. All these devices notwithstanding, Stendhal throughout life cut a sorry figure of a lover. At home, comfortably ensconced at his writing-table, far from the field of operations, this typical example of the anticipator in enjoyment excelled in the art of erotic strategy, "loin d'elle il a l'audace et jure de tout oser": in his diary he makes notes of the exact hour when the

lady who happens to be his goddess at the moment will yield to his advances; "in two days I could have her," he writes in English. But as soon as he is in the beloved one's presence, the would-be Casanova becomes as bashful as a schoolboy; every sortie ends, as he himself declares, in the discomfiture of the man to whose advances the lady is on the point of surrendering.

At the most inopportune moments his timidity would stem the tide of his finest ardours; he would become "timide et sot" just when his gallantry should have been at its most active; or he would be cynical when the circumstances demanded tenderness, sentimental when he should have attacked with decision; in a word, he muffed the most admirable opportunities by over-calculation and undue constraint. The excessive delicacy of his feelings caused him to be awkward; he was so anxious lest he should appear sentimental, "d'être dupe," that he hid his tenderness "sous le manteau de hussard." Hence his frequent "fiascos" in his relations with women, mishaps which were the secret bane of his life. Stendhal longed for nothing so much as for a tangible success in the lists of love: "L'amour a toujours été pour moi la plus grande des affaires ou plutôt la seule." For no philosopher, for no poet, not even for Napoleon himself, did he betray so much respect as for his uncle Gagnon and his cousin Martial Daru both of whom had enjoyed the embraces of countless women without being at pains to make use of any psychological refinements. Indeed, their successes were probably due precisely to the absence of such devices. Gradually Stendhal comes to the conclusion that nothing militates so positively against one who ought to be the conquering male in his relations with womankind as an excess of feeling. He declares that the less trouble a man

takes, the more he assumes a nonchalant attitude as though a mere game of billiards were at stake, the more likely is he to be successful in winning a woman's love. But he himself, he tells us, has "trop de sensibilité pour avoir jamais le talent de Lovelace." He would far rather have been a seducer than the poet and artist and civil servant he actually was.

Stendhal is obsessed by his own inferiority as a Don Juan; no other problem so completely occupies his thoughts. And it is to his persistent work in the anatomizing of his own eroticism that we owe so penetrating an insight into the minutest tracery of his sensations. He himself admits that it was his frequent disasters in his love life that aroused his interest in psychological investigation. Had things been otherwise, he would never have been forced to observe the feminine psyche as he did, he would never have stopped to examine the finest and tenderest emanations from a woman's soul. Women taught Stendhal to test himself, and thus he became the accomplished psychologist he was.

There was a special reason why Stendhal began the task of self-portraiture so early—he had a capricious, an unreliable memory. He was ever pencil in hand scribbling his notes on the margins of books, on scraps of paper, on letters; above all, he recorded his thoughts in his diary. The fear lest he should forget some important experience and thus lose a link in the continuity of his life led him to fix each stir of the feelings, each event, on paper, the moment he had experienced it. In a moving letter to the Comtesse Curial, a letter written with tears and blood, he notes the date when the relationship began and when it ended, the record being made with the cool precision of an entry in an official register. He inscribes the exact

hour when Angela Pietragrua at length yields to his embraces. He exercises the same exactitude in recording his most intimate spiritual experiences, as he does when jotting down the number of francs he spends on food, on books, or in paying his washerwoman. He is perpetually making notes. Sometimes it would seem that he begins to think only when the pencil is between his fingers. To this restless graphomania we owe from sixty to seventy volumes of self-portraiture embodied in all kinds of imaginative works, in letters, and in anecdotes. Even today scarcely half of what Stendhal wrote has been published. He is not urged to so much scribbling by any exhibitionist trend; his impulse is, rather, an egoistical anxiety lest one single drop of the substance that is Stendhal, a substance which has never existed before and will never be created again, should be lost in the sands of his unretentive memory. It is this anxiety which we have to thank for the fact that so much of Stendhal has been preserved for us.

Like everything else in his make-up, Stendhal analyses the unretentive quality of his memory with admirable lucidity. First of all, he recognizes that he is egotistical and lets everything slip away which does not directly concern himself. "Je manque absolument de mémoire pour ce qui ne m'intéresse pas." We therefore find few records of events happening outside the realm of the spirit, hardly any dates, or figures, or facts, or places; all the details of important historical occurrences completely pass out of his mind; even the meeting with such celebrated people as Byron and Rossini fades from his mind; he adds to his memories of objective facts or alters them with wilful or unwitting fabrications, and, far from trying to conceal this defect, he acknowledges it frankly: "Je n'ai

de prétention à la véracité qu'en ce qui touche mes sentiments." In one place he protests that he has no intention "de peindre les choses en elles-mêmes, mais seulement leur effet sur moi." Nothing more clearly shows that for Stendhal "les choses en elles-mêmes" have no existence except in so far as they influence the movements of his own soul. But when outside events exercise such an influence they react upon him with the utmost rapidity and incisiveness. Thus we find that the man who is uncertain whether or not he actually talked with Napoleon, who does not know to what extent his "memories" of the Grand Saint Bernard pass are really derived from an engraving, this same man will remember with the utmost precision the passing gesture of a woman, a tone of voice, a movement, because he himself was stirred by the event. Where his feelings have not been implicated, his memories are clouded, so that whole decades of his life are hidden to us. Curiously enough the same thing happens when he has felt too intensely, as for instance during the passage over the Saint Bernard, on his first journey to Paris, in his first night of love. He often remarks that he has no remembrance of such and such a thing because the emotion he felt was "trop véhément." Excess of feeling shatters Stendhal's impression as an explosion shatters a bottle.

Thus remembrance, in Stendhal, can flower only when the humus of the heart is watered with emotional excitement, and yet it cannot flower if the heart is submerged in too impetuous and stormy a flood. Outside the sphere of the feelings, his memory is not to be trusted, and his artistry suffers likewise: "Je ne retiens que ce qui est peinture humaine. Hors de là je suis nul." The impression must be a spiritual one if Stendhal is to retain it. As an egocentric self-portraitist, he never wishes to pose

as an eye-witness of world-happenings, for he knows that he cannot re-think events; he can only re-feel them. He reconstructs the course of his life by following the devious ways taken by the reflexes of his mind, never by the direct process of conscious rememorization; "il invente sa vie"; he remembers, not facts, but feelings, and out of his memory of the feelings he conjures up his facts. His self-portraiture thus approximates to the novel, just as his novels approximate to autobiography. In many places, his works are what may be paradoxically termed "fictional reality."

Stendhal's reminiscences are, therefore, only reliable insofar as detail is concerned; one must not expect from him any such comprehensive picture as the one given by Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Even as autobiographer, Stendhal remained true to himself, an impressionist, recording in fragmentary form day-to-day observations, jotting down his lightning flashes of insight, assiduously keeping his records decade after decade—of course for his own use alone, "un tel journal n'est fait que pour celui qui l'écrit." And yet—for he remains true to himself—ambiguities, roundabout methods, complexities abound. We know that he writes for a duplex-self; for the writer-self, the self-enjoying ego of 1801, and likewise for the Stendhal of a later day for whose satisfaction he is at pains to depict and to elucidate his life: "Ce journal est fait pour Henri s'il vit encore en 1821. Je n'ai pas envie de lui donner occasion de rire aux dépens de celui qui vit aujourd'hui." The impulse "de se perfectionner dans l'art de connaître et d'émouvoir l'homme," is already at work in the lad of nineteen. We see him at that tender age postulating a shrewder personality than the present one, a "Henri plus méfiant," a later and

colder Beyle endowed with more sobriety than the youth. He fancies these "mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de ma vie" laid before the fully adult being, for control, and for practical use by that adult. It is almost as if the stripling realized that the fully grown man would eagerly desire the elements necessary for the construction of an integral portrait of himself.

Here, then, we are presented with another side of Stendhal's genius: his clairvoyant preparation of himself for his later self. He fixes the photograph of himself insofar as he gives fixity to the minutiæ, to the "petits faits vrais"—tiny grains of sand which life will place in the hour-glass of the mature man. Jot down the smallest of experiences at the moment when they are warm and throbbing like a bird in the captor's hand; never rely on the memory, that untrustworthy stream which contorts and submerges everything in its current; never feel shy of recording the most trifling incidents! Who knows but what the adult man may find the greatest pleasure precisely in the trifles which welled up from his heart of long ago? It was, therefore, with instinctive genius that young Beyle set himself to write his diary, for it is from this youthful record that Stendhal was later to cull the material for his autobiographical romance *Henri Brulard*, an elderly man's wonderful survey of the years of childhood and youth.

We see him in Rome, seated on the steps of San Pietro in Montorio, an aging man musing over his life's course. In a month or two he will be fifty. Gone for ever the days of his youth, women, love. It is well to ask oneself: "Qu'ai-je été? Que suis-je? Qu'ai-je donc été?" The time for heart-searchings that should fit a man for adventure and for exaltation is past. Now it is seemly to look back

over the road already travelled, and not forward into the unknown. That same night, returning home from a party at the ambassador's, a party where he had found nothing but boredom (seeing that women could no longer be won, and desultory conversation irked him), he suddenly made up his mind. "Je devrais écrire ma vie, je saurais peut-être enfin, quand cela sera fini, dans deux ou trois ans, ce que j'ai été, gai ou triste, homme d'ésprit ou sot, homme de courage ou peureux, et enfin au total heureux ou malheureux." The premonition of the boy becomes a reality for the man, and Stendhal writes a consecutive story of his life, thus coming to a full knowledge of himself by means of an integral description of himself.

An easy thing to propose, but mighty difficult of accomplishment! For Stendhal has made up his mind to be "simplement vrai" in his *Henri Brulard*. He knows how hard it is to be true, to tell the truth when truth shows the writer at a disadvantage; he knows how easy it is for vanity to distort the memory of events. How is a man to find his way through the dark labyrinth of the past, how distinguish between a beacon and a will-o'-the-wisp, how avoid the falsehoods that lie ambushed at every corner? Stendhal discovers a way to shun these pitfalls: "Je prends pour principe, de ne pas me gêner et d'effacer jamais." He will change nothing in the first draft, "pour ne mentir par vanité." He will ride roughshod over shame, will write his reminiscences so rapidly that the censor will not be aroused in time to interfere; the artist must not be given a chance to improve the style; there must be no touching-up, the picture must remain a snap-shot; the record must be made so swiftly that events have no leisure to assume a theatrical pose. Stendhal's pen speeds on wings; he writes quickly and never reads over his pages;

he is quite unconcerned about style, unity, or architectonic; "J'écris ceci sans mentir, j'espère sans me faire illusion, avec plaisir comme une lettre à un ami." He has no wish to lie for the sake of artistic effect as did Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He consciously sacrifices the beauty of his memoirs to straightforwardness; art is sacrificed to psychology.

In actual fact, both *Henri Brulard*, and its sequel *Souvenirs d'un égotiste*, are of dubious artistic worth. Both bear traces of hurry in composition; they are careless, and lack plan. Stendhal throws his reminiscences on paper just as they crop up in his mind, indifferent as to whether they fit the time and place in his book or not. The sublime rubs shoulders with the platitudinous; aimless generalities are interspersed with the most intimate of personal revelations; and verbosity often impedes the "dazzling" development of a dramatic situation. But the flaws only serve to set off the fundamental honesty of the exposition, and every detail is of as much value to psychological science as a whole book could be. Such revelations as his perilous love for his mother, his deadly hatred for his father, things that are usually thrust down into the unconscious and never come to the light of day if the censor keeps good watch and ward, all these intimate secrets of the soul slip through into Stendhal's books during the second when he deliberately relaxes his vigilance. He never allows his feelings time for "moral" reflection, for titivating and making themselves "beautiful." And it is precisely because of this system that he is able to catch them where they are most sensitive, to seize them and record them in their shameless nudity. What tragical alarm and anxiety, what an elemental wrath, surges up from the child's heart in these annals! Who can ever

forget the scene when little Henri, hearing of his Aunt Seraphie's death, throws himself on his knees and thanks God? The child's life had been embittered and made forlorn by this woman, and now he was rid of "one of the two devils, who had been let loose upon my unhappy childhood" (the other "devil" was young Beyle's father). Yet immediately after his prayer of thanks, we find the admission that even this devil had for a moment been able to arouse the boy's precocious eroticism.

The man must indeed have been a genius who could so boldly and so astutely reveal to his fellow-mortals the amazing complexity of the underworld of the emotions. Before Stendhal's day it is rare to find anyone who has shown how innumerable are the strata which go to the composition of a human being, how the most contrary of feelings tingle in the extremest nerve-ends, how in the immature soul of a child we already find the germs of the coarse and the noble, of the brutal and the tender; and it is to this casual discovery that we owe the first of all essays in analytical autobiography. Stendhal is the first to draw a portrait of the ego not as an entity (as Jean-Jacques Rousseau endeavoured to do, not to mention Casanova for whom the ego was the only palpable reality), but as a conglomerate of warring elements, interpenetrating one another, surging over and under and behind one another. Like an archæologist who from a potsherd or from an inscription on a stone can guess the history of days long past, so does Stendhal gather from his minute observations the unending treasures hidden in the human soul, bringing to light the rulers and tyrants of this hidden world, and the wars and battles that have devastated it. Inasmuch as he disinterred and reconstituted his own self, he opened the way for adventurous discovery to those

who came after. It is difficult to point to any other whose curiosity about himself has borne so much fruit and has furnished so great a contribution to scientific knowledge.

What makes *Henri Brulard* such an unforgettable document of the psyche is that the book was written with complete indifference as to form and style, as to posterity and literature, as to ethical standards and criticism. It was written purely to gratify a private and personal enjoyment. In his novels, Stendhal wished to be the artist; but in *Henri Brulard* he was a man, an individual and nothing more, a person impelled by curiosity to know himself. The portrait has all the charm of spontaneity we find in an improvisation. Nothing definitive, nothing complete and finished, comes to trouble the vivid and fascinating picture of his personality. One never "gets through" Stendhal. We are lured on to fresh discoveries concerning him, we would fain unravel new enigmas, we wish to understand him by knowing him, and know him by understanding him. The experimental spirit is constantly wishing to make further experiments on him. Thus his essential being, with its twilight colours, its contrasts of hot and of cold, its vibrant nerves, is as living to-day as ever it was. Because he portrayed himself, he has bequeathed his passion for investigation and his science of psychical observation to a later generation; and, as a true amator, as a consummate lover of his own uniqueness, he has taught us the delight there is to be gained from self-questioning and self-observation.

MODERNITY OF STENDHAL

Je serai compris vers 1900.

STENDHAL, though born in the eighteenth century, the century of the crude materialism of Diderot and Voltaire, overleaped the whole of the nineteenth century and landed in the epoch of psycho-energetics, when the study of the workings of the soul had developed into a science. As Nietzsche says: "Two generations had to pass away before he was overtaken, and before some of the riddles which fascinated him were again brought forward for solution." Stendhal's work hardly dates at all, many of his premises have become the common property of mankind, and not a few of his prophecies are now in course of fulfilment. Though he lagged behind his contemporaries as far as fame was concerned, he has outsoared them all now with the exception of Balzac. These two alone, Balzac and Stendhal, transcended the limitations of their own time: the former by his revelation of the divisions and subdivisions of society, by his disclosure of the supremacy of money, by his prophetic scrutiny of the mechanism of political control; the latter in that, with the penetrating eye of the psychologist, with a genius for grasping at actualities, he was able to reduce the individual to his component particles and to detect the slightest differences in shade and contour. The subsequent evolution of society has proved Balzac's prevision to be correct; the new psychology has shown the soundness of Stendhal's work; for though to their contemporaries their conclusions appeared

disproportionately large or too minutely differentiated, nevertheless these conclusions admirably fit the social and individual conditions of to-day. Balzac's world-embracing vision foresaw the modern epoch and Stendhal's intuition anticipated the modern man.

Stendhal's characters relive in us to-day, they are our very selves, trained in self-observation, informed in matters psychological, cheerfully self-conscious, free from moral prejudices, inquisitive about self, weary of all the cold theories of cognition, and interested only in the throbbings of their own personality. Differentiated man is no longer a monstrosity, he is no longer a special case as he was when Stendhal lived and wrote in a world of romanticist art, for the new sciences of psychology and psychoanalysis have now placed delicate instruments in our hands, so that we may reveal the hidden and disentangle the involved. This "marvellously prescient man," as Nietzsche calls him, though living in the days of post-chaises and wearing a Napoleonic uniform, is amazingly one of ourselves. His total lack of dogmatism, his early preference for being a European rather than a man of some specific nationality, his detestation of the mechanical regularization of the world, his hatred of pompous mass heroics, seem to us parts of our own make-up. How fine is his serene self-composure when compared with the sentimental bleatings of his contemporaries, and how splendidly did he make good by the influence he exerted upon great writers of a later generation. Innumerable are the trails and the ways he has opened to subsequent men of letters: Dostoeffsky's Raskolnikoff is unthinkable had Stendhal's Julien not been created; Tolstoy's battle of Borodino owes much to its classical exemplar, Stendhal's memorable description of Waterloo; and much of

Nietzsche's joy in thinking was derived from the refreshing perusal of his predecessor's works. Thus the "âmes fraternelles," the "êtres supérieurs," whom Stendhal sought in vain during his lifetime, gathered round him in the end, in the only fatherland his free cosmopolitan spirit could recognize and love, the fatherland of men who resembled himself.

Of all his contemporaries, Balzac alone hailed him as brother, and there are none of that generation who are more akin to us to-day in spirit and in feeling than this man, Henri Beyle. Through the medium of cold print and paper we can feel his warm and breathing presence. Although he plumbed his own depths as none other before him, he remains unfathomable. He revels in contradictions, dazzles us with the phosphorescent hues of his enigmatical personality; he lays bare his innermost secrets and hides others from our gaze, fulfilling himself and yet never completing the picture of himself, always and always a live and palpitating personality.

Those who have been out of touch with their own epoch are the very ones whom a new epoch delights to honour. The most delicate spiritual oscillations have the longest wave-length in time and eternity.

Nothing acts so strongly, and so effectively imposes a like mood on everyone, as a life work, and, in the long run, the work of a whole life.

DIARY, MARCH 23, 1894

Tolstoy

1828–1910

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PRELUDE

The important thing is, not the moral perfection to which a man attains, but the process of attainment.

DIARY IN OLD AGE

"THERE was a man in the land of Uz . . . ; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil. . . . His substance was . . . seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east."

Thus begins the history of Job, who was blessed with contentment until the hour when God raised a hand against him and smote him with sore boils, that he might awaken from his dull satisfaction, might suffer from torment of soul and hold counsel with himself. Thus, likewise, begins the spiritual history of Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, who was also the greatest of all the men of his country and his time. He, too, was highly placed among the mighty ones of the earth, living in wealth and comfort in the house of his fathers. His body was overflowing with health and strength. The woman of his choice became his wife, and bore him thirteen children. The work of his hands and his brain proved imperishable, and will be a beacon for all time. Just as the peasants of Yasnaya Polyana bowed low in reverence when the lordly boyar passed them by, so did all the world bow down in deference to his fame. Like Job before the testing, Leo Tolstoy

had nothing left to wish for. In one of his letters we read the bold assertion: "My happiness is without alloy."

Suddenly, betwixt night and morning, all these things became meaningless, worthless. This diligent man conceived a loathing for his work. He became estranged from his wife, grew indifferent to his children. At night, after tossing sleepless upon his bed, he would wander to and fro like a sick man. In the day time, he sat before his writing-table staring into vacancy, unable to put pen to paper. Once he rushed upstairs and locked his fowling piece away, being fearful lest he should turn the weapon against himself. Sometimes he groaned as if his heart were breaking under its load of sorrow. Not infrequently he sat in a darkened room, sobbing like a child. He would not open letters or receive friends. His sons looked askance at their father, his wife despairingly at her husband, who had thus in a moment been overwhelmed with gloom.

Why this sudden transformation? Was he stricken with leprosy or some other hidden and terrible disease? Had disaster befallen him? What had happened to Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, that one so rich in worldly goods should in an instant have become so poor in joy, that the greatest man in Russia should be thus overborne by misery?

Terrible was the answer: nothing had happened to him. Or, to be precise (and this answer was more terrible still, and truer), Nothing had happened. Tolstoy had glimpsed the Nothing that lies behind things. Something had given way in his soul, a crack had opened, a narrow black fissure; and he had no choice, in his panic fear, but to go on staring through it into this void, this unnamable Nothing, this nihil, this nullity, this not-self that stretches alien and cold and dark and impalpable, as background to a life pulsing with warm blood; he had no choice but to

contemplate the Nothing which is the eternal framework of our transitory existence.

He who has once peeped into this unutterable abyss can no longer turn away his eyes. His senses are darkened; life has lost savour and meaning. Laughter is frozen on his lips. He can grip naught in his hands without feeling the chill from this realm of non-existence strike inwards from his fingers to his shuddering heart. Everything he looks at is associated in his thought with this other thing that is nihil, is Nothing. Yesterday, the happenings of life were firm, were instinct with the warmth of feeling; to-day they are withered and valueless. Fame is but a grasping at the wind; art is fool's play; money is yellow dross; and one's own live and wholesome body is no more than food for worms. Black invisible lips drain the sap and the sweetness from all that seemed of worth. How cold a place is the world for one to whom this abyss of nonentity has yawned; the "maelstrom" of Edgar Allan Poe which drew everything into its vortex; Pascal's "gouffre," whose depths were deeper than the topmost altitudes of the spirit.

Futile is the attempt to veil it, to hide it. What do we gain by calling this open maw "God," and declaring it holy? What do we gain by pasting leaves torn from the Bible over the fissure? The darkness of the primeval void is so intense that it makes its way through the thickest parchment, extinguishes the altar-lights in the churches; and from the ice-bound poles of the universe there comes a cold too intense to be thawed by the lukewarm breath of the Word. What do we gain by the attempt to drown this oppressive and deadly silence with our shouts, or by preaching at the tops of our voices, as children in a dark wood will sing to scare away their fears?

The silence of Nothing overpowers the efforts of conscious speech. When the murk of this dread nullity has once entered the heart, there to take up its abode, neither will nor wisdom can bring light.

In the four-and-fiftieth year of a life that was exercising a worldwide influence, Tolstoy for the first time perceived this great Nothing, its recognition being his share in the universal human lot. Thenceforward to the day of his death, he continued to stare unceasingly into the vacancy, the impalpable void that lies behind existence. But even when facing that awesome prospect, the vision of Tolstoy was unclouded; it was still the vision of a man who for wisdom and spirituality was unmatched in our day. His titanic energy was unrivalled in the struggle with the unnamable, in the contest with the primal terror of mortal man; never did anyone more resolutely than he contrapose to the question which destiny asks of man, the question which man asks of destiny. No one ever suffered more intensely than he from the empty and soul-cramping prospect of the Beyond; no one endured the suffering with more splendid fortitude, since in him the clear and bold and determined observation of the artist was sustained by a virile consciousness which enabled him to look into the black vacancy undismayed. Leo Tolstoy was the most vigilant, the most sincere, the most incorruptible personality in modern art and literature; and never for a moment did he blench as he faced the tragedy of existence. Nothing could have been more heroic than his endeavour to give form and meaning to the incomprehensible, and to discover a core of truth in the unavoidable.

For three decades, from the middle twenties to the middle fifties, Tolstoy lived a carefree life, immersed

in creative work. For three decades more, down to the end, his thoughts and feelings were monopolized by the endeavour to wrest a meaning from life, to understand the incomprehensible, to reach the unattainable. Things went easily with him until he set himself the task of saving, not himself alone, but all mankind, by his struggle for the truth. His attempt makes him a hero, almost a saint. His failure makes him the most human of all human figures.

LIKENESS

"My face was that of an ordinary peasant."

A FACE overgrown with hair, showing more coverts than clearings, thickets barring the way to inspection of the inner man. The patriarchal beard, streaming in the wind, climbs high up on to the cheeks, for decades hides the full lips, and covers the brown and seamed and bark-like skin. Eyebrows are matted, interlacing like gnarled tree-roots, a finger's breadth in vertical extent. A flood of grey hair foams over the forehead, the spume of the disordered locks. Wherever you look, there is a hirsute profusion that shows all the wanton luxuriance of a tropical forest. As with Michelangelo's Moses (the pattern of virility), the preponderant impression conveyed by Tolstoy's visage is derived from the aspect of the white-foaming waves of his huge God-the-Father beard.

One cannot but try to unclothe this hair-clad countenance in imagination, to clip away the outgrowths, to conjure up the nude face as index to the soul within—and the portraits of Tolstoy in youth, when he was clean-shaven, are a help here. Having done this, we shrink back in alarm. For, undeniably, this man of patrician birth is rough-featured, has a peasant physiognomy. Genius has chosen to inhabit a grimy, low-ceiled hut; the work-room of this brilliant mind is little better than a Kirghiz skin tent. The place has been fashioned by a bungling country carpenter rather than by a Grecian demiurge, a skilled craftsman. Rough-hewn like wood split for firing

are the crossbeams of the forehead surmounting the little windows, the tiny eyes. The skin, like the outer surface of a wattle-and-dab cottage, is of clay, is greasy-looking and lustreless. In the middle of the full quadrangle of the face, we see a nose with gaping, bestial nostrils, a nose that is broad and pulpy as if flattened by a blow from a fist. Behind untidy wisps of hair project misshapen, flapping ears. Between the hollowed cheeks lies a thick-lipped, surly mouth. The general effect is inharmonious, rugged, ordinary, verging on the coarse.

Shadow and gloom brood over all, dullness and weight oppress the melancholy face of this working man; not a sign of upward inspiration, of spiritual radiance, of bold ascent—such as we see in the marble dome of Dostoeffsky's brow. The visage is unrelieved by a scintilla of light. He who denies this speaks falsely. There can be no question that the face is irremediably common, is shuttered and barred; that it is not a temple but a prison-house for thought; that it is dark, sombre, cheerless, hideous. In youth, Tolstoy knew well enough that his countenance was unpleasing. Any allusion to his appearance was, he said, distasteful to him. "How can a man with so broad a nose, such thick lips, and little grey eyes like mine, ever find happiness on earth?" That was why he soon let the hair grow on his face, that his mouth might be hidden behind a sable mask—which only in old age grew silvered, and thereby venerable. Not until the closing decade of his life was the heavy pall of cloud lifted; not until towards the end of autumn did compensating rays of beauty fall athwart this tragical landscape.

Genius, for ever a wanderer, had here found house-room in a lowly habitation, in a Russian physiognomy of everyday type, within whose walls one might expect

to discover anything in the world except the man who lived for the things of the spirit, except the poet and dreamer, except the creative worker. As boy, as youth, as grown man, and even in old age, Tolstoy could always, as far as appearance went, have been lost in a throng. For him, one coat, or one cap, was as appropriate as another. With such an anonymous all-Russian visage, a man could just as well preside over a council of ministers of State or over a rabble of drunken rascals in a pothouse; could just as well peddle bread in the marketplace, or, in the silken vestments of the metropolitan, hold the cross outstretched over the heads of a kneeling multitude. But nowhere, in any occupation, in any garb, or anywhere in Russia, would such a countenance stand out in contrast to those of the surrounding crowd. When he was a student, Tolstoy might have been the composite embodiment of the youths of his year; when he was an army officer, there was nothing to set him apart from other brethren of the sword; when he had returned to a country life, he would have been perfectly acceptable as the conventional stage figure of the squire. If you see a photograph of him out driving, with a white-bearded retainer seated beside him, you may puzzle your brains a good while before you can make up your mind that the man holding the reins is the coachman and that the passenger is the count. Look at another picture, where he is seen having a talk with some peasants. If you did not know, you would never guess that this Leo sitting among the village elders is a man of rank and wealth, a man of very different birth and station from Grigor and Ivan and Ilya and Pyotr and all the rest of them. His face is so completely anonymous, so perfectly all-Russian, that we must regard him as Everyman; must feel that, for

this once, genius has not donned the semblance of any one man in particular, but is impersonating the people at large. That is why Tolstoy has no face of his own; he possesses the general face of the Russian folk, because in him the whole of Russia lives and breathes.

Hence the disappointment that, to begin with, almost invariably overwhelmed those who saw him for the first time. They had travelled a great distance by train, had driven over from Tula, and were seated in the reception room, full of awe, awaiting the master. Their conception of him was preformed. They expected something mighty and majestic; a man with a flowing beard, like that of God the Father, dignified, imposing, giant and genius rolled into one. Anticipation swelled to awe, as they humbly bowed their heads and lowered their eyes before this imaginary picture of a splendid patriarch, whom they were about to see in the flesh. At length the door opened. Entered a short, thick-set fellow, whose movements were so agile that his beard wagged. As he came in he ran rather than walked; then, pulling himself up, he stood looking with a friendly smile at the startled guest. In a cheerful tone, speaking quickly and easily, he prattled a welcome, offering a ready hand. The visitor, as he took this hand, was nonplussed, was shaken to the soul. What? This genial manikin, this nimble little fellow—could it really be Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy? Somewhat disconcerted, the guest looked up into his host's face.

Of a sudden, he held his breath in amaze. Like a panther, from beneath the bushy jungle of the eyebrows, a flash sprang forth from the grey eyes, that piercing gaze which no picture or photograph could represent, though everyone who saw Tolstoy has spoken of it. Like a knife-thrust, hard as steel and sparkling, it plunged

home, and held fast. You could not stir; you could not evade it. Hypnotized by its influence, you had passively to endure its probings. No veil could withstand it. Like a projectile it pierced the armour-plate of pretence; like a diamond it cut the glass of every mirror. No one (as Turgenieff, Gorky, and a hundred others have assured us) could continue to dissimulate under this penetrating scrutiny.

Only for a second did the piercing gaze endure. Then, their weapons sheathed, the eyes softened in a gentle and kindly smile. Like shadows of clouds upon the water, all changes of feeling wrought changes of expression in these restless pupils. Anger made them cold, displeasure froze them to crystal, kindliness thawed them, passion made them burn like fire. They could smile with an inner light, these mysterious stars, though there was no change in the hard mouth; and, under the melting influence of music, they could stream with tears as abundant as those of a peasant woman. Clear and bright at one moment from spiritual satisfaction, they would cloud over at the next, grow dark and sad, overshadowed by melancholy, and would then seem aloof and impenetrable. They could be coldly and pitilessly observant; could cut like a surgeon's knife and disclose hidden mysteries like Röntgen rays, to ripple an instant later with good-humoured curiosity. They could speak all the tongues of feeling, these eyes, the most eloquent that ever shone in a human face. Gorky, as was to be expected, has found the most apt description for them: "In his eyes, Tolstoy had a hundred eyes."

In these eyes, and only thanks to them, Tolstoy's face had genius. All the light-energy of the man so richly endowed with vision was concentrated in them; just as

the beauty of Dostoeffsky, the man so richly endowed with thought, was concentrated in the dome of his brow. Everything else in Tolstoy's countenance, the beard, the bushiness, was wrapping, was armature or carapace to safeguard the sparkling jewels, magical and magnetic, which attracted the substance of a world into themselves and radiated it forth once more—the most accurate spectrum of the universe known to our age. A thing might be infinitely small, yet these lenses make it visible; stooping from an inconceivable height like the falcon upon a cowering mouse, they would pounce upon the most insignificant detail, and were equally competent to disclose in a well-rounded panorama the expanses of the universe. They could blaze in the topmost altitudes of the spiritual world, and could with equal success throw a searchlight into the darkest abysses of the soul. They had ardour and purity enough, these sparkling crystals, to contemplate God in an ecstasy; and they had courage enough to contemplate devastating nullity, the Nothing, the gorgon's head that turns the beholder to stone. All things were possible to these eyes; except one, perhaps: to be inactive, to sink into reverie, to enjoy the purely quiescent pleasure of a gracious and happy dream. Perforce these eyes, the instant their lids were lifted, had to quest for prey, pitilessly awake, inexorably free from illusion. They would tolerate no wraith of glamour; they stripped off every veil of falsehood; they tore facile belief to tatters. To them, everything was disclosed in the stark nakedness of truth. It is terrible when such steel-grey daggers are turned against their owner, for then their keen points thrust mercilessly home, and stab him to the very heart.

He who has such piercing eyes, who can see truth, has

at his disposal the whole world and all its wealth of knowledge. One thing he will certainly lack, he whose eyes are ever watchful, and pierce to the inmost heart of truth; he will not have happiness for his portion.

VITALITY AND ITS COUNTERPART

I should like to live long, very long; and the thought of death fills me with a childlike, poetic alarm.

FROM A LETTER WRITTEN IN YOUTH

Rude health. A body built stoutly enough to last a century. Big bones and muscles, giving their owner the strength of a bear. Lying on the ground, young Tolstoy can with one hand lift a heavy soldier. Sinewy and elastic, he can beat all comers at the standing jump; he swims like a fish, rides like a Cossack, uses scythe or sickle as well as any peasant. Physical fatigue is unknown to this man of iron frame. His every nerve is tense and vibrant, is at once supple and tough, like a sword of Toledo steel; his every sense rings true, is alert. No weak spot anywhere, no breach or cranny or lack in the defensive armour of vital energies; and never, therefore, does serious illness affect this man of stalwart constitution. Tolstoy has a bodily system endowed with almost incredible powers of resistance, barricaded against every weakness, fortified against the assaults of age.

His vitality is unexampled. Beside this biblical elder, this peasant barbarian, equipped with such stupendous virility, all other modern artists and men of letters look like women or weaklings. Even those who resembled him in their power to maintain creative output when they had become patriarchs suffered in body because the flesh had

grown weary, thanks to the unceasing activity of the spirit, because the sword was wearing out the scabbard. Look at Goethe (a man of kindred horoscope, having also been born on August 28th), whose mental powers were, like Tolstoy's, unimpaired in his eighty-third year; Goethe at sixty had begun to grow stout, and, being nervously afraid of chills, was careful in winter time to exclude every breath of fresh air from his study. Old Voltaire, lean and bony, looks more like a plucked fowl than a human being, as he sits at his desk covering ream after ream of paper with his scribbling. Kant in old age, a mechanical mummy, hobbles stiffly and toilsomely along the Königsberger Allee. But Tolstoy as octogenarian breaks the ice for his daily tub, digs vigorously in the garden, prances over the tennis court. At the age of sixty-seven, he was fired by the ambition of learning to ride a bicycle; at seventy, he was still a redoubtable skater; at eighty, he continued the daily practice of vigorous gymnastic exercises; and at eighty-two, when death was already beckoning, he would make his riding whip sing in the air over his mare's ears when, after a twenty-verst gallop, she halted or stumbled.

The topmost boughs of this giant Russian oak, which is turgid with sap flowing into its finest ramifications, have grown up into the sky of the patriarchial years, without as yet any withering at the roots. The old man's sight remains unimpaired to the day of his death. When out riding in the forest he can see the tiniest beetle crawling over the bark of a tree, and can without a glass discern the falcon soaring on high. His hearing is acute as ever; and his wide nostrils dilate with an animal-like pleasure as he snuffs the breeze. When spring comes its round, the white-bearded pilgrim is overpowered by an intoxication

of the senses, is inebriated by the sharp, ammoniacal odour of the manure that has lain beneath the snows, an odour which now rises into the air and mingles with the fresh smell of the thawing earth. He recalls eighty previous springs, remembers them clearly, each with its own individuality, its own peculiar contribution to the complex of odours, actual and revived in memory. So vivid are the impressions that his eyes fill with tears. Wearing the heavy hobnailed boots of a countryman, and with the vigorous swing of a pioneer, the old fellow strides across the wet soil, which squelches beneath his tread. His hand knows nothing of the tremor of senile decay, and his farewell letter is penned in a script as firm as that of his boyhood's days. His mind shows the imprint of the years as little as his body. His conversation outsparkles that of all others; an alarmingly efficient memory enables him to reconstruct every detail of the past. Nothing is lost, nothing has been obliterated by the friction of time. Still, when he is thwarted, he knits his brows angrily; still he bursts into laughter as hearty as a youth's; his speech is still full of picturesque imagery; his blood still courses swiftly through his veins. When he is seventy or more, during a discussion concerning *The Kreutzer Sonata*, someone remarks that at the author's age it is easy to abjure the lusts of the flesh. The old man fires up, and says with mingled pride and anger: "You are mistaken; the flesh is still powerful; even now I have to wrestle with it."

Nothing but this irrepressible vitality can explain Tolstoy's unflagging creative energy. During the sixty years of his authorship, there was not one that lay fallow. His mind never rested; his senses never slept, never even indulged in a comfortable doze. Right on into old age, he had no experience of grave illness; working ten

hours a day, he laughed at fatigue; his energies never drooped, never needed whip or spur. He used no stimulants, drank neither wine nor coffee, never heated his blood with meat or strong waters. Without these artificial aids, thanks entirely to their own native vigour, his senses were so keen, so lively, so perpetually on the stretch, that the lightest touch would set them tingling, the merest drop would make their brim-full cup overflow. For, his magnificent health notwithstanding, Tolstoy was a "sensitive." Indeed, he could not have been the supreme artist he was, unless he had been irritable in the physiological sense of the term, unless he had been "thin-skinned." The key-board of his nervous system needed to be touched lightly, for the vehemence of the healthy response made all emotion dangerous to him. That is why (like Goethe and like Plato) he was afraid of music, which stirred too readily the waves of feeling, aroused too forcibly the hot-blooded passions. "Music has a terribly powerful effect on me," he declared. In very truth, when the family was assembled round the piano, quietly listening, of a sudden Tolstoy's nostrils would begin to twitch, his brows would draw together, he would become aware of "a strange sense of pressure in the throat"—and he would jump up and hasten from the room, not wishing to burst into tears before them all. "What does this music want of me?" he said once, alarmed at his own subjugation. He realized that it really did want something of him: that it threatened to wrest from him something which he, for his part, was determined never to yield up; something which he had hidden away in the lowest nooks of feeling, though it was now in a ferment, and on the verge of breaking forth. Something mighty, something whose strength and exuberance he dreaded, was stirring within

him. In defiance of his will, the storm of sensuality was rising from the depths, was seeking an outlet. He, who hated and feared sensuality (perhaps because he, better than any, knew its might), regarded women, regarded Woman, with an aversion that was unnatural in a healthy man, was proper to none but an anchorite. "Woman," he wrote, "is harmless only when she is wholly engrossed in the duties of motherhood, is a paragon of modesty and virtue, or has acquired the venerability of old age"—in a word, when she does not exert the lure of sex, which Tolstoy throughout life regarded as "the sin of the body." For this anti-Hellene, this Christian extremist, this monkish zealot, woman and music were instinct with evil because, by awakening sensuality, they tended to turn men away "from the inborn qualities of courage, resolution, reasonableness, justice"; because, as Father Tolstoy preached in later days, they provoked us "to the sin of fleshliness." They, too, "wanted something of him," something which he could not give; they, too, tended to stir something which he did not wish to have awakened. What this was can be discovered without any elaborate search. It was his own excessive sensuality, which, after years of struggle, he had at length succeeded in subduing. For him it was like a crouching beast, whipped into submission, slunk into some out-of-the-way corner of his being, tremblingly ready to leap from its lair if the master's watchfulness were for a moment relaxed. Music was a charm which lulled the master's will, and the "beast" thereupon was ready to seize its opportunity. Let a woman appear, and the whole pack of the bloodthirsty passions began to bay, to rage against the iron bars of their prison. Tolstoy's rabidly monkish anxiety concerning matters of sex, his fanatical detestation of even the most healthily cheer-

ful, nakedly natural sensuality, warrant the inference that within him a fierce virility, a passion like that of a rutting stag, lay hid. We know that in youth, passion led him into the wildest excesses, so that he described himself to Chekoff as having been "an indefatigable whoremonger"; that thereafter, for fifty years, the beast was kept in the cellarage, walled in there, but alive. His writings, characteristically puritanical, show in one thing only that the exuberant sensuality of youth remained exuberant throughout his prime and far on into old age. His acute anxiety concerning matters of sex betrays him; his attitude of the hermit who has fled into the wilderness to escape the promptings of the flesh, the ultra-Christian ascetic, quaking with terror as he forcibly turns away his eyes from "Woman," from the temptress who is in very truth nothing more than the phantom form assumed by his own immeasurable lusts, reveal the story of his inward struggle.

Always and everywhere we feel that what Tolstoy dreaded most in the world was himself, his own bear's strength. His delight in his splendid health was invariably shadowed by his panic fear of the bestial unrestraint of the senses. True, he controlled them as few others before him or since; but he knew that he had to pay the penalty for being a Russian, and therefore an inheritor of a passion for excesses and extremes. That was why it became a point of prudence with him to tame his body by trying to weary it; that was why he always kept his senses on the stretch, gave them plenty of exercise, supplied them with fresh air and an abundance of harmless amusements. He tired his muscles out by berserker activities with plough and scythe, by vigorous games, by riding and swimming to the point of exhaustion. In an open-

air life, he could find an outlet for energies which, had he been pent up at home, cut off from free contact with nature, would have been a torment and a danger. That was why he was so devoted to the chase, in which all his senses could be indulged, both higher and lower. Then feelings which were at other times repressed became active; the slumbering instincts of Muscovite and perhaps Tartar ancestors awakened, the instincts of the wild horsemen of the steppes, of nomadic and fighting races; sensuality raised its head once more. The Tolstoy of the pre-apostolic days was intoxicated by the smell of sweating horses, by the excitement of riding hell-for-leather, by the joys of the hunt and the kill; he took a savage delight (which the apostolic Tolstoy, the advocate of an all-embracing compassion, found incomprehensible) in the terrors of the quarry. "The pangs of the dying beast give me exquisite pleasure," he avows when he has brained a wolf with the butt end of his gun; and this outburst of blood-lust is an index to the brutality which found issue during the mad years of youth, but was sternly repressed throughout the remainder of his life. Long after he has, on moral grounds, abandoned all these blood-sports, his hands twitch involuntarily when, out walking, he puts up a hare; the fettered instincts rattle their chains. Resolutely, however, he calls his passions to heel, and in the end he is content to gratify the lusts of the flesh by an innocent delight in the contemplation and delineation of all that lives—a delight that remains ecstatic to the end. The instant he goes out into the open and enters into communion with nature, his sportive senses are quickened, begin to appraise, to appreciate and to apprehend. Now the veriest trifle can excite interest and arouse enthusiasm. He laughs heartily on catching

sight of a fine horse; pats and strokes the warm, silken neck with an almost voluptuous pleasure, heartily enjoying the flow of animal heat by conduction into his fingertips; indeed, the whole world of animality fills him with rapture. For hours he is entranced as he watches young girls dancing, fascinated by the graceful movements of the lithe bodies. When he meets a good-looking man, a handsome woman, he will stop short, enter into conversation, quite forget his surroundings, while he exclaims: "How wonderful a sight is a well-shaped human being!" He loves the body because it is the vessel that holds life, because it has a surface that is sensitively responsive to light, because it inhales the marvellously compounded aromas of the air, because it provides the wrappings for the hot and swiftly flowing blood; he loves the body, in all its swelling fleshliness, as the very meaning and the very soul of life.

A passionate animalist, he loves the body as a musician loves the instrument upon which he plays; he loves the body as man in the natural and elementary form, and he loves himself in the body much more than in the flawed and disingenuous soul. He loves the body in all its shapes and at all seasons from the beginning to the end, and his first conscious memory of this autoerotic passion dates from the second year of his life. The point needs to be emphasized, if we are to realize how crystal clear, how sharply defined, Tolstoy's memories remained, in defiance of the obliterating touch of time. Whereas in Goethe's case and in Stendhal's memory began with the eighth year or at earliest with the seventh, the two-year-old Tolstoy enjoyed feelings that were no less complex, no less multiform, and no less integrated, than those of the full-grown artist. Read his description of his first bodily sensation: "I

am sitting in a wooden bath-tub completely engrossed in the smell (new to me, but not disagreeable) of a fluid with which my body is being rubbed. It must, I feel sure, have been bran-water. The novelty of the impression has its due effect, and for the first time I become pleasurably aware of my little body and of the ribs showing through the skin; I note the smooth, dark cheeks and the turned-up sleeves of my nurse; I perceive the warmth and the wetness of the bran-water, and am conscious of its peculiar smell; but especially do I recall the feeling of smoothness which I experienced whenever I passed my hand over the inner surface of the bath-tub."

Having read this passage, let the reader analyse and arrange the memories of childhood it reveals, let him classify them in accordance with the sensory zones to which they respectively belong. He cannot fail to be astonished at the comprehensiveness of the two-year-old's perceptions. Little Leo *sees* the nurse, *smells* the bran, *distinguishes* the new impressions, *feels* the warmth of the water (heat-sense), *hears* it plashing, *feels* the smoothness of the inner surface of the bath-tub (touch-sense); and all these simultaneous impressions received by the various sensory nerves coalesce into a "pleasurable" self-contemplation of the body as the general surface whereby all the sensations of life pass into consciousness. We see, in his case, how early the suckers of his senses have clung, like limpets, to existence; we see how, already in the little child, the manifold influences radiating from the outer world have awakened a precise, a well-defined consciousness. Readily, therefore, can we understand that when this same child has grown to manhood, when the senses have been stimulated by riper experience, when the perceptions have been intensified by a

maturer consciousness, when the nerves have been more fully awakened by curiosity—every impression will be subtilized and intensified a thousandfold. Then the child's gratification at the discovery of his own body in the bath-tub will have expanded to become a savage and almost frenzied delight in existence, a delight which (just as in the child) mingles outer and inner, the world and the ego, nature and life, in a unified paean of intoxication. The fully grown Tolstoy, merging himself with his environment, often does so in an ecstasy which borders on drunkenness. Read how he goes into the forest that he may contemplate the world which has singled him out from among millions to perceive it, to feel it, more intensely and more wittingly than them all; he fills his chest and flings his arms wide, as if he hoped to embrace the infinite. Read how, moved no less strongly by the infinitely small than by the infinitely large, he stoops to smooth out tenderly the leaves of some trampled plant, or with passionate joy he looks at the quivering wings of a dragon-fly; then, since his friends are watching him, he turns his face away lest they should see that his eyes have filled with tears. No other contemporary writer, not even Walt Whitman, has so keenly felt the bodily pleasure of the fleshly organs. This Russian, sensuous as Pan, as much at one with the world-all as was that ancient God of the Hellenes, is unrivalled for the vigour and success with which—looking, handling, probing—he makes every item in the universe his own. We understand his extravagant and boastful-seeming assertion: "I myself am nature."

This Russian oak, spreading its branches wide, a universe within the universe, is firmly rooted in the earth from which it springs. Nothing, one would think, could

threaten its stability. But even the solid earth trembles now and again, quakes under Seismos' touch; and Tolstoy, no less, trembles from time to time, his steadfastness shaken. His eyes are fixed in a rigid stare, and he gazes into vacancy. Something that he cannot understand has entered his field of vision; something which, scrutinize it as he may, is alien, chill, hostile to the warm, teeming life of the body. To him, a man of the senses, it remains incomprehensible because it is not a thing of this earth; not a thing which he can touch, taste, handle, assimilate. It is an unfriendly shadow behind all the frank delights of the senses; and it cannot be ranged among them, cannot be joyfully accepted as part of himself by this man who feels himself at one with the world of warm, living experience. How is he to face the terrible thought which suddenly splits that world in twain, the thought that these eager senses will one day be stilled; that the hand will no longer be able to feel; that the body through which the blood is coursing so merrily will fall to pieces, and become food for worms; that naught will be left of it but a grisly skeleton? What if it were to seize him, to-day or to-morrow, this Nothing, this black shadow, which is nowhere yet everywhere, which is manifest and inevitable and palpable though invisible and incomprehensible? Tolstoy's blood ran cold when the thought of death forced itself upon him. His first encounter with the dread spectre took place in childhood, when he was five years old. They led him to his mother's corpse. On the bed lay something cold and stiff, which yesterday had been a living woman. Never could he forget the sight. With a heart-rending cry, he tore out of the room in a panic, chased by all the furies of terror. Other deaths in the family, his brother's, his father's, his aunt's, had a similar effect on him. He

felt as if a cold hand had been laid on the nape of his neck; he shuddered.

In 1869, not long before the crisis in his life, he describes the "white terror" of such an access: "I stretched myself on my couch, but had scarcely done so when a sense of horror forced me to get up again. I had a feeling of intense anxiety, like that which one has when on the point of vomiting. It was as if something had torn my existence to shreds, without quite putting an end to it. Again I tried to sleep, but the terror was there, red, white; something had given way in me, and was none the less holding me together." A dreadful thing had happened. Before death had laid even so much as a finger on Tolstoy's body, forty years before the end, there had come a foretaste which was to endure as long as life lasted. Anxiety sat at night by his bedside; it devoured his joy in life; it lurked between the pages of his books; and it gnawed ceaselessly at his brain, blackening his thoughts and corroding them.

Obviously, Tolstoy's fear of death is as overwhelming as his vitality. It would be a euphemism to speak of it as mere nervousness, comparable with the neurasthenic phobia of an Edgar Allan Poe; with the mystical, pleasurably tinged dread of a Novalis; with the melancholic gloom of a Lenau. In Tolstoy's case, we have to do with a crudely animal, a barbaric, terror; with a violent revulsion of feeling, a hurricane of fear, a panic revolt against death. When he shrinks from the inevitable, it is not as a thinking man, not as one endowed with a virile and heroic spirit. He shrinks as a slave who had been branded would, with a yell, shrink from another application of the red-hot iron; his terror finds vent in animal fashion, taking the form of an explosion of uncontrollable alarm. He manifests the loathing of death which has for

countless generations been incarnate in all creatures that live and breathe, a loathing and a fear that in him find embodiment and voice in a human frame. He rebels against the thought of death; he will not die, he will not —and the realization of what must be masters him none the less, after an agonizing struggle. For we have to remember that the thought takes him by storm at a moment when he feels perfectly safe; that in this Russian bear there is no transition to temper the passage from the idea of life to the idea of death. He is in such rude health that for him death is something utterly alien, whereas for the generality of us there are bridges between the two, bridges on which we have often walked, the bridges of illness. Few are the men of fifty in whom death is not already latent, so that his coming cannot take them by surprise. Hence they do not shrink with so much horror from his first energetic onslaught. Dostoeffsky had once stood, blindfolded and tied to a post, awaiting a volley from a firing squad; and, being an epileptic, he was familiar with the paroxysms in which death comes near. Such a man, accustomed to suffering, is less disconcerted by the thought of death than will be one who has never had an hour's serious illness, has never really had to look his dread adversary in the face. His blood will not run cold, he will not be affected by what we can scarcely avoid calling a craven fear of death. For Tolstoy (who regards life as worth living only when his ego is in the full tide of expansion, when he is "drunken with life"), the most trifling reduction of vitality signifies illness—so that we find him at six-and-thirty already speaking of himself as "an old man." That is why the new sensation makes him feel as if he had been shot through the heart. Only one whose existence is characterized by

such vitality can feel so overwhelming a dread of the non-existence which is the absolute complement of life; only one to whom health is a stupendous reality will be so rabidly insurgent against the yet more stupendous reality of death. But for the very reason that in this case an elemental vitality was confronted by a no less elemental fear of death, there occurred within Tolstoy a veritable combat of the giants, unparalleled in world literature. For only a titan can battle like a titan, can resist like a titan. A masterful man, an athlete of the will, does not capitulate without striking a blow, does not run away from Nothing to seek a refuge behind the church door. After the first shock of the assault, he rallies his forces in the endeavour to overthrow the enemy. Recovering from his initial alarm, he entrenches himself in philosophy, raises the drawbridge of his fortress and bombards the unseen foe with missiles propelled by the catapults of logic. Contempt is his first line of defence: "I take little interest in death, mainly because, so long as I am alive, death does not exist." Death is "incredible." The only thing he is afraid of is, "not death, but the fear of death." He continues (for thirty years!) to reiterate that he has no fear of death, while his asseverations are belied by the fact that from the time he is fifty down to the end he is almost exclusively occupied in discussing the problem of death "with all the energies of the soul." His assurances deceive no one, not even himself. There can be no doubt that for him the wall of spiritual and sensual security had been breached during the first attack of anxiety neurosis, so that all his nerves and all his thoughts lay open thenceforward to assault; that after he had passed the age of fifty, Tolstoy was able to fight only with the aid of vestiges of a self-confidence which had

once been perfect. The more desperately he tries to escape from the obsession, the more clearly does he realize that he has been hopelessly beset. Step by step he has to yield ground, to admit that death is no mere hobgoblin, no mere scarecrow, but a formidable adversary, not to be scared away by brave words. He asks himself whether some sort of accommodation may not be possible; whether, since he cannot go on living in perpetual warfare against death, he may not be able to live on terms of armistice with the enemy.

When he has realized this possibility, there begins a new and fruitful phase in his relations with death. He no longer kicks against the pricks; no longer gives himself up to the illusion that he can keep death at bay with sophisms, or exclude the idea of death from his mind by an exercise of the will: he tries to fit the idea of death into a niche in his daily life, to merge it with that life, to reconcile himself to the inevitable, to "accustom" himself to the thought of death. Giant Life has to admit that Giant Death is invincible; but the thought of death is not invincible, and Giant Life must therefore consecrate his energies to the struggle against this thought. After the manner of the Spanish Trappists, who sleep every night in their coffins in order that familiarity may breed contempt for death, Tolstoy endeavours to steel his will by daily autosuggestion, by a perpetual memento mori, forcing himself to think continually of death without shrinking. All the entries in his diary begin with three mystical letters of the alphabet, the initials of the Russian words that mean "if I live." For years, he begins each month by reminding himself: "Nearer to death." Thus does he habituate himself to looking death in the face. Habit overcomes hostility, and conquers fear, so that

in the course of thirty years death comes to seem a friend rather than an enemy. Death, taken to his arms, is now one of the spiritual constituents of his life, and in this way the erstwhile anxiety is "practically nullified." The white-haired sage can face with composure what used to be an object of terror. "One need not think about death, but one must always have his picture before one's eyes. Then one's life becomes more festive, momentous, sincere, fruitful, happy." Tolstoy has made a virtue of necessity. Adopting the perennial device of the creative artist, he has rid himself of his anxiety by objectifying it. He holds death and the fear of death aloof by incorporating them in the creatures of his fancy. The upshot is that what at first seemed annihilating, ends by making his life more profound, and (contrary to all expectation) promotes the splendour of his art. When he has accepted the fact that he must die, when he has made death his familiar, he knows all about death. Thanks to his heart-searchings, thanks to having already died a thousand deaths in imagination, this devotee of life becomes an expert in the representation of death, the master of all those who have ever depicted it. Anxiety, outspeeding reality, eagerly questioning the multifarious possibilities, winged by fancy and with every nerve aquiver, has always been more creative than heavy-footed and dull-witted health. How much more so, the awakened primal anxiety, the arch-horror of a titan, who has been shuddering, panic-stricken, for decades! This panic terror teaches him to know the symptoms of bodily extinction; he becomes intimately acquainted with every line which Thanatos the destroyer marks with his graving-tool upon the dying flesh; experiences all the miseries and alarms of the soul that is passing into the void. The artist is sum-

moned to his task by the very perfection of his knowledge. The death of Ivan Ilich with his hideous outcry, "I will not, I will not," the pitiful end of Levin's brother, the various passings in *Three Deaths*—how could these greatest of Tolstoy's psychological achievements, these eavesdroppings at the uttermost marge of life, have been possible, but for the author's personal experience, the mental catastrophe through which he had passed, the soul-searching horror he had endured, and the alert, almost superhuman watchfulness of his new poise? Only as a contrast to the radiance of perfect health could the finest shades of thought and the most trifling bodily changes of the dying be described with so much precision. Sympathy pre-supposes that the sympathizer must have gone through a kindred experience—at least in imagination. Before Tolstoy could describe these hundred deaths, he must have lived through them in the recesses of his tortured soul. The apparent meaninglessness of the sudden overshadowing of his existence kindled in the mind of Tolstoy the artist a knowledge of new meanings. Premonitory anxiety was the goad which drove his art from the shallows of life, from the mere contemplation and reproduction of the superficial aspects of reality, into the innermost depths of knowledge. That and nothing else was what enabled him to supplement his Rubens-like vision of actuality by the tragical illumination from within, not so much physical as metaphysical, which animates the canvases of Rembrandt. Because Tolstoy suffered more keenly than other men from the agony of death in life, he was able to limn that agony more vividly than any other writer.

Every crisis is a gift bestowed by destiny upon the creative artist. This boon conferred a new and more per-

fect symmetry to Tolstoy's spiritual outlook on the universe, and likewise to his art. The contrasts interpenetrated one another and won to equipoise; the frenzied struggle between the lust for life and its dread counterpart gave place to a harmonious mutual understanding; the life that was slowly ebbing and the death that was casting an ever deeper shadow before its coming were now splendidly and poietically confluent, wave of creation following wave in the heroic twilight of his declining years. As Spinoza would have it, his tranquillized feeling at length finds repose in a pure suspense between hope and fear of the last hour: "It is not good to fear death, nor yet to long for death. The scales must be so balanced that the pointer is vertical. Life goes best when this condition is fulfilled."

The tragical discord has at length been resolved. The veteran Tolstoy does not hate death, nor flee from it, nor look forward with impatience to the last encounter. He is content to meditate on death serenely, as an artist sketches the outlines of a work which is already finished in the hidden realm of the unconscious. That is why, when the dark hour comes, fate is kindly, giving him a death great as his life has been, a death that is the ripe fruit of his own works.

THE ARTIST

The only true pleasure is the pleasure of creative activity. One can create pencils, boots, bread, children—that is to say, human beings. Without creation, there is no true pleasure, none that is not tinctured with anxiety, suffering, pangs of conscience, shame.

FROM A LETTER

No work of art attains its climax of beauty until those who contemplate it can forget that it is an artificial creation, and are able to regard it as naked truth. Tolstoy's writings often produce this sublime illusion. They seem vividly real. We forget that they are fiction, that the characters are imaginary. When we read him, we fancy that we are looking through an open window into the world of fact.

Were all artists like Tolstoy, we might readily come to believe that art is a simple matter; sincerity, a self-evident affair; imaginative writing, nothing more than a faithful account of reality, an effortless transcription. We might suppose that an author need merely possess (in Tolstoy's own words) "a negative quality, that of not being a liar." His writings have the self-sufficiency, the naïve naturalness, of a landscape; they are as full of life and colour as nature itself. The mysterious powers of poetic frenzy, the fruitful ardours, the phosphorescent vision, the bold and often illogical fantasies, that are elemental in the creative artist, are to all appearance lacking in Tolstoy's epic work, and we fancy that he has no need of them. In his case, not a drunken demon, but

a clear-sighted and perfectly sober man, has been at work, observing facts, recording them faithfully, and with perfect ease fashioning a replica of reality. Thus do we figure his method to ourselves.

Here the perfection of the artist's touch has led us astray, for what is more difficult than truth, more arduous than clarity? The original texts of his works show that Leo Tolstoy was not a man to whom writing came easily. He was one of the most painstaking and diligent of penmen; his literary frescoes were mosaics, laboriously pieced together out of millions upon millions of details, out of countless minute and particular observations. What looks as if it had been sketched freehand in broad and bold and clear outline, has really been the result of strenuous craftsmanship on the part of a man who did not see things in sweeping visions, but set to work slowly and patiently and concretely. Like the German old masters, he built up his pictures by stages. First came the groundwork, followed by close attention to the flat surfaces and by scrupulous accuracy in contour and line. In the next stage, the colour tone was added. Not until then did he endow his epic fable with the radiant actuality of life, by developing of set purpose the lights and the shades. *War and Peace,* which runs to two thousand pages, was written over and over again, seven times in all. Great chests were filled with the notes and references concerning this book. Every detail was checked with meticulous care. In order to give an accurate description of the battle of Borodino, Tolstoy spent two days in the saddle, riding hither and thither over the battlefield, map in hand. He journeyed far to visit survivors, on the chance of being able to glean picturesque items. Not content with printed books, with ploughing through the contents

of public libraries, he wrote to the heads of noble families and to the keepers of archives asking for a sight of letters and other documents which might yield up to him some fragment of truth. Thus in the course of years upon years of labour did he collect innumerable droplets of quicksilver, which coalesced, in the end, into one enormous, well-rounded, and homogeneous globule. Not until his search for truth was finished did he begin to strive for clarity. We know that a writer of lyrics, such as Baudelaire, must polish every facet. Tolstoy, with the zeal of the artist who aims at perfection, was no less scrupulous in scouring and refining, in hammering and oiling and smoothing his prose. A redundant sentence, an inappropriate adjective, in a voluminous book, would exercise his mind so much that, after reading and correcting and returning proofs, he would telegraph and have the press stopped in order to modify a discordant syllable. This first printing was cast back into the crucible of his mind, there to be melted once more, and refashioned. If ever an art was laboured, the epithet applies to the seemingly effortless, outwardly natural and spontaneous work of Tolstoy. During seven years, he toiled for eight or ten hours a day. Can we be surprised that, robust though he was, he should have suffered from a psychical collapse after production of each of his great novels? His stomach would go on strike, his senses would be clouded, and the man who had just written a masterpiece would be affected by a sense of failure intensified to the verge of melancholia. Then his only resource was to seek solitude. He had to get far away from civilization, live in a Bashkir hut on the steppe, diet himself on koumiss for a while, and thus regain his equanimity. This writer of epics that are Homeric in their grandeur, this raconteur whose tales are pre-emi-

nently natural and crystal-clear and endowed with the primitiveness of the folk-spirit, is, under the skin, a profoundly self-critical and self-tormented artist. (Are there any artists of a different kind?) But, as a crowning mercy, the toilsomeness of the process leaves no trace upon the finished product. Of our time, and yet transcending time, this prose which is the outcome of art that conceals art gives the impression of having always existed, of being self-created, ageless as nature. Nothing stamps it as belonging to any specific epoch. If one of his novels were to drop into your hands by chance, and you were to read it for the first time without knowing the name of the author, you would hesitate to guess in which decade or even in which century it had been penned. That is why I describe his writing as timeless. The folk-tales *Three Old Men* and *Does a Man want much Land?* might have been written, like the story of Ruth and the story of Job, a couple of thousand years before the invention of printing, and when the alphabet was a recent discovery. *The Death of Ivan Ilich* and *Polikoushka* and *Linen-Measurer* may belong to the nineteenth century or the twentieth or the thirtieth; for what finds expression here is not the contemporary mind as voiced by Stendhal and Rousseau and Dostoeffsky, but the primitive mind, which is changeless and perennial—the terrestrial pneuma, the primal sentiment, primal anxiety, primal sense of loneliness, felt by man brought face to face with the infinite. Perfect mastery frees itself from the trammels of time. Tolstoy never had to learn how to tell a tale, and he never lost the art. In this matter, his genius was of spontaneous growth. It could not wither, and could neither improve nor deteriorate. Take the descriptions of scenery in *The Cossacks*, written when the author was twenty-

four, and compare them with the incomparably brilliant account of an Easter morning in *Resurrection*, penned when he was sixty, a storm-tossed generation later. Both of them are equally full of nature's direct and universal appeal, both are equally instinct with sensuous enjoyment.

For the very reason that his writing is thus perfected to a degree which lifts it above the realm of the individual and makes it timeless, we are scarcely aware of the personality of the artist in the work of art. We do not regard him as a writer of fiction; he is a master-recorder of realities. We hesitate, in fact, to term him an "imaginative writer," a "poiete," for this name applies to those who modify and mould, producing a new type of human kind, mysteriously interpenetrated with mythos and magic. It applies to the ecstatic, who, in the intoxication of his visions, embodies his ineffable experiences in Pythian words; to the visionary, who finds in melody a solution for the insoluble, and in the symbol an understanding of the incomprehensible.

Tolstoy does not belong to this category. He is not a man of the "higher" type, but wholly of this world; not super-earthly, but the sum and substance of all that is earthly. Never does he outstep the limits of the comprehensible, the clear, the palpable; yet within these limits, what perfection he displays! His qualities are not those of a muse or a magician; they are ordinary qualities, intensified. As compared with Everyman, his mind functions more vigorously, and his senses are keener; he sees, hears, smells more acutely, more extensively, and more consciously, than the average individual, and he has a more delicate sense of touch; his memory is more trustworthy and more logical; his thought-process is swifter, more efficiently associative, and more accurate. He

never crosses the boundary line between the normal and the abnormal. That is why people are slow to speak of him as a genius, though they give this name to Dostoeffsky as a matter of course. His writings are never inspired, never animated with that elemental afflatus of the incomprehensible which is peculiar to the seer, the visionary, the prophet. That is why he is so clear; that is why you can always understand him. His earthbound imagination cannot outsoar the region of "factual memory" to discover something which is not part of Everyman's experience. Hence his art remains positive, intelligible, thoroughly human; a daylit art, depicting reality raised to the *n*th power.

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Tolstoy does not create dream worlds; he describes realities. Consequently, when he is telling a tale, we do not seem to hear an artist speaking, but the facts telling their own story. Men and beasts come forth from his world as if from their own warm abiding-places, moving with their own natural and unforced rhythms. We do not feel that behind them is a vehement being who urges them forward, hounds them along (as Dostoeffsky drives his characters) with a scourge, so that, hot and shrieking, they burst impetuously into the arena of their passions. When Tolstoy is telling a tale, we do not hear his breathing. He tells it as upland peasants climb their native hills; slowly, equably, step by step; without rushes, without impatience, without fatigue, without weakness; and the throbbing of his heart never troubles the smooth tone of his voice. That is why we do not lose our composure when we are in his company. Dostoeffsky hurries us up to the dizzy altitudes of delight; suddenly plunges us into un-

fathomable abysses of misery; and then makes us soar with him in the dreamland of fantasy. But with Tolstoy we are always wide awake, like students of science. We stumble, we doubt, we tire; yet, with his strong hand clasped in ours, we climb his epic mountains stage by stage, the horizon widening as we climb. Incidents disclose themselves slowly; only by degrees does the prospect clear: but everything happens with the assured and infallible movement of a clockwork mechanism, as when, on a hill at sunrise, we watch the light spreading inch by inch across the lowlands. Tolstoy tells his story simply and dispassionately, like the epic writers of early days, the rhapsodists and psalmists and chroniclers of times which had not yet waxed impatient, when nature was still at one with her creatures, before there was an arbitrary classification of beings into humans and animals and plants and stones, and when little things and great were regarded as equally deserving of reverence and equally instinct with the divine fire. He sees things from a universal outlook, anthropomorphically. Although in moral matters no one could be less of a Hellene, in that he is an artist his feeling is thoroughly pantheistical. For him there are no gradations in rank between the howls and twitches of a dying dog, the death of a beribboned and bestarred general, and the fall of a tree blown down by the wind because it has perished at the root. The beautiful and the ugly, the animal and the human, the clean and the unclean—he contemplates them with an artist's vision, as equals in all of which he sees the soul. It matters little whether we say that he naturalizes man, or that he humanizes nature. The result is that, within the sphere of earthly being, nothing is locked away from him. Women

have often asked with amazement how it is that this man can be so familiar with their most intimate and hardly communicable bodily sensations, so that he can describe, as if he had felt them, the dartings and draggings in the breasts of a mother about to give suck, and the agreeable shudder that runs up and down the arms of a young girl who exposes them for the first time at a ball. Could animals read *Anna Karenina* and speak, they would express no less wonder at the uncanny intuition which enables him to sense the eager, painful longing aroused in a spaniel by the smell of snipe, or the instinctive urge to begin a gallop which inspires a thoroughbred when the hunt is up. Here Tolstoy is able by his native powers of perception to realize all that the zoologists and entomologists, from Buffon to Fabre, have learned by elaborate study. Nor is his accuracy of observation affected by preferences for this or that object which comes within his ken; his love knows no favourites. Being incorruptible, he does not regard Napoleon as more of a man than the most insignificant of the emperor's soldiers; nor is this latter a more important being than the cur that runs at his heels; nor yet the dog than the stone which it treads under foot.

One who sees so much and so well does not need to invent; one who observes imaginatively does not need creative imagination. Tolstoy spent his life using his senses, and recording their impressions; he had no dreams of a world beyond reality. His art did not come from above, but worked its way into the interior; it was (to quote Nötzel's admirable phrase) an architecture of the depths, not of the heights. In full possession of his faculties, thereby contrasting with Dostoeffsky the visionary, he never emerged from the confines of the ordinary to

enter the realm of the wonderful. Instead of building an airy edifice in a region of supramundane fantasy, he planted his props in the common earth and in everyday human beings. Moreover, in the sphere of the human, Tolstoy had no need to study abnormal and pathological types; or, going further than this, like Shakespeare and Dostoeffsky, to conjure up new intermediates between god and beast, Ariels and Aliashas, Calibans and Karamazoffs. He burrows into the depths of reality so effectively, that in his presentation the most commonplace peasant assumes a mysterious aspect. As shaft leading into the deeps, anything will serve his turn: a tiller of the soil, a soldier, a drunkard, a dog, a horse, a what-you-will; not costly and rare and subtilized materials, but whatever comes first to hand. Yet he endows these ordinary figures with unprecedented spiritual attributes; and he does it, not by embellishing them, but by revealing their true inwardness. His whole technique is comprised in this revelation of the truth. He uses no other instrument than the sharp and penetrating instrument of truth; but he uses his boring-tool with such relentless vigour, and thrusts it so deep into every happening, every object of contemplation, that, marvelling, we discern a deeper world within the world, a spiritual stratum to which no miner before him has pierced. Realities, not dreams, incite him to his formative task. Like the sculptor, he must have clay to mould and marble to shape; he cannot, like the musician, create out of winged air. It is quite in keeping that Tolstoy should never have written a line of verse, for to him, an arch-realist, poetry of every kind was necessarily antipodal. His books speak the language of naked truth and none other; this is his limitation; but they speak that lan-

guage more perfectly than the books of any other imaginative writer, and this is his greatness. For Tolstoy, beauty and truth are one.

Tolstoy, therefore, is the most clear-seeing of all artists, and yet no seer; he is an incomparably able recorder of truth, while he lacks the power of creative fancy. (I iterate of set purpose, to press my meaning home.) In his task of fashioning an amazingly comprehensive and multiform picture of the world, he has no assistant but the senses five; alert, subtle, swift, accurate, and yet bodily, mechanical, earthly. Not through the nerves, like Dostoeffsky, not through visions, like Hölderlin and Shelley, does Tolstoy secure his supremely delicate perceptions. The co-ordinated activities of his senses are enough. One may conceive of them sallying forth like bees, returning again and again with their load of tinted dust, passionate seekers of the particulate elements of the real, for elaboration into the golden honey of the work of art. Or, to vary the image, this unwinged artist is like a chemist in his laboratory, patiently distilling ethereal oils from sweet-scented blossoms. The simplicity of Tolstoy's writings is always the outcome of overwhelming myriads of detail observations. If Tolstoy is to know a man's thoughts and feelings, he must first of all have studied every jot and tittle of his subject's physical being. He begins like a doctor, with an inventory of the patient's bodily peculiarities. Not until this preliminary investigation is finished does he go on to the epic process of distillation he applies to the universe of his novels. "You cannot conceive," he writes to a friend, "how arduous is the preparatory labour of ploughing the soil in which I purpose to sow the seed. It is terribly hard to consider and reconsider beforehand everything that may

happen to all the characters in the work I have planned. It is very difficult to reflect upon the thousand possible combinations of so many actions, and to choose no more than one out of a million possibilities." Since this process of assembling details and condensing them into a unity (a process which is mechanical rather than imaginative) has to be repeated in the case of each one of the characters, a simple calculation will show that myriads upon myriads of grains must be patiently ground to powder, and the resulting atoms patiently recombined, before the desired form can emerge.

Thus Tolstoy examines all the bodily peculiarities of his dramatis personae with cold accuracy, as with a magnifying glass. After the Holbein manner, line upon line, a mouth is shaped, upper lip and lower lip being separately described with their individual anomalies. Every twitch of the corners associated with particular moods is precisely noted; and the wrinkles or folds that show themselves to express amusement or anger are sedulously described. Then the author slowly paints in the hue of the lips, explores their fullness or their firmness with an investigatory finger, traces the moustache that overhangs them. These details give us the form of the lips, their fleshly characteristics. Then comes a description of their functioning, as influenced by and influencing the voice and the speech—particular attributes of this particular mouth. Nose, cheeks, chin, and hair are described with the same, almost alarming, anatomical accuracy, detail after detail being carved with the utmost precision. Then, in the artist's laboratory, the various acoustic, phonetic, optical, and motor observations are weighed and measured and mutually adapted; for gesture must correspond mathematically with glance, glance with smile, and smile with

verbal emphasis, if the figure as a whole is to exhibit harmonious unity. From this mass of observations, the author proceeds to extract the square root or the cube root. He sifts his materials finely, so that only essentials remain, while unessentials are scrapped. Contrasted, therefore, with the abundance of preliminary details, we have a thrifty use of the derivative attributes—but these few recur again and again throughout the book, so that, after a time, as each figure reappears upon the stage, the appropriate characteristics rise spontaneously in the reader's mind thanks to an associative process. How skilled a craftsman is Tolstoy! He, who seems to describe haphazard, and without set purpose, is, in truth, a past master of his art. A whole book would be needed to trace the mechanism of this method in its minutiae, and to show that the apparent artlessness of Tolstoy's writing is the outcome of an art which creates the persons of his drama by the condensation of a perplexing multitude of observations into a unity.

Not until all the necessary sensual elements have been provided, not until the bodily machine has been completed with geometrical accuracy, does the Golem, the laboratory-made human being, begin to speak, to breathe, to live. In Tolstoy's works, the soul, Psyche, the divine imago, is always prisoned in a thousand-meshed net of observations, enwrapped in and held fast by a web of skin and muscles and nerves. In those of Dostoeffsky, the clairvoyant, Tolstoy's great counterpart, individuation begins at the antipode, begins with the soul. For Dostoeffsky, soul is primary, and spontaneously weaves its own destiny; the body is but a loose and light integument, a thin pupa-case through which shines a fiery core. In happy moments, this fiery core can consume its wrappings, can

free itself, can soar up into the ether of the feelings, into pure ecstasy. But for Tolstoy, the perspicacious, the artist who neither sees visions nor dreams dreams, the soul has no wings, nor even the power to draw free breath. For him, it is always coffined within the body, subject to the inexorable law of gravitation. That is why even the most aspiring of his creatures can never wing their way upwards to God, can never spread pinions that would enable them to outsoar this terrestrial sphere. When they would fain climb towards holiness and purification, they must do so laboriously, step by step, carrying the burden of the flesh. Psyche cannot fly back straightway into the Platonic realm, but must remain on earth while undergoing transformations, subject to the restrictions of gravity and to the universal heritage of original sin. In large measure, the tragical gloom of Tolstoy's work would seem to be dependent upon this primacy which he allots to the bodily over the spiritual; for again and again, when we read this wingless and humourless writer, we are painfully reminded that we live on earth and are doomed to die; that we must ever go afoot; that we cannot shake off the bonds of the corporeal; that in the midst of life we are in death, are face to face with Nothing, are bondslaves to reality, are wanderers in a maze which has no outlet. "I wish you more spiritual freedom," wrote Turgenieff to Tolstoy, with a brilliant flash of insight. We wish the same thing for the characters in Tolstoy's books: more spiritual freedom; the power to soar on spiritual pinions; ability to escape from the circumstantial and the bodily, to become cheerful, light-hearted, carefree; or at least we wish for them a capacity to dream of a purer and serener world.

His art is autumnal. All its outlines rise sharply above the level horizon of the Russian steppe, and the air is

heavy with the acrid smell of withering and rotting vegetation. The skies are uniformly grey; no cloud-shadows drift, like dream smiles, athwart the sombre landscape; the existence of the sun behind the dull canopy of heaven has been forgotten. Hence, the author's cold and clear illumination brings no warmth to the heart and differs greatly from the cheerful radiance of spring, which never fails to arouse a passionate expectation of blossoming in woods and meadows and in the hearts of men. When we read Tolstoy, we feel that winter will soon be here; that nature is dying; that all men are grass, and that our own particular embodiment of the universal human life must ere long perish. We are shown a world without dreams, without illusions, without lies; a terribly empty world; a world without God—for Tolstoy discovers God as an afterthought, because life needs God; just as Kant puts God into the cosmos as an afterthought, for reasons of State. It is a world in which the only light is relentless truth. Perhaps, at first sight, Dostoeffsky's spiritual world may seem even gloomier, more sombre, and more tragical than Tolstoy's, with its equable, cold clarity; but Dostoeffsky often pierces the gloom with flashes of intoxicating rapture, during which, for fleeting instants, we are transported to visionary heavens. Tolstoy's art, on the other hand, knows nothing of the joy of intoxication; it is always as sober, translucent, and uninebriating as water. So limpid is it that we can see into its uttermost depths; yet such glimpses do not take us quite out of our selves or fill our minds with ecstasy. One who, like Tolstoy, can never dream, can never forget the realities of the present to wanton in visions of a beauty that is not of this world, one to whom naked truth is all-important, may have an unrivalled perception of nature's comprehensive grip,

of the inescapable ties of our own warm and living bodies, of the universal destiny of mortal men; but he will never have an inkling of the freedom which enables the soul to escape from the thraldom of its own gloom. These books make readers serious and reflective, as does science with its dry light, its patient boring into reality; they do not confer the boon of happiness.

What did the man himself, this man of profound insight, think of his own unmerciful and disillusioning observation, of his art that lacked the aureate kindliness of the dream, the seductive impetus of cheerfulness, the graciousness of music? At bottom, he never loved it, for it was unable to inspire either in himself or in others a happy and affirmative acceptance of the life it portrayed. How hopeless is the aspect assumed by existence under these remorseless eyes, which look upon the soul as no more than a palpitating little fragment of bodily mechanism amid the vast environing spaces of death; upon history as a meaningless chaos of haphazard incidents; upon human beings as skeletons which for a brief space inhabit tenements of warm flesh; and upon the inexplicable and disorderly activities of these creatures as having no more significance than the running of water or the withering of a leaf. Never for a moment does music sound over this dull succession of ordinary events; never is the burden of this nihilism discarded; never a smile to throw a fugitive charm across these unmeaning activities; always a ruthless, a cruelly sober portrayal of gloom, an uninterrupted analysis of a madhouse drama, the impressions of an embittered observer who will not allow himself to be deluded by any false consolers.

Can we be surprised that, after thirty years of such macabre portraiture, Tolstoy should suddenly have been

seized with the desire to do something else than make his fellows cruelly aware of the inexorability of their earthly lot; should have longed for a method of self-expression which would not only disburden his own shoulders, but would make life easier for others; should have yearned for an art "which would awaken higher and better feelings"? Was it not natural that he should have wished to touch the silver strings of the lute of hope, to develop an art that would help to deliver people from the weight of earthly things? Vain the desire, vain the attempt! Tolstoy, pitilessly keen of vision, with eyes focused to see things as they were, could not see them otherwise; could not but see life as overshadowed by death, as a dark and issueless maze. His art, which did not know how to lie and did not wish to lie, could not bring solace. Presumably that was why in old age, since he could not look upon life or describe it as anything other than a tragedy, Tolstoy became inspired with the hope that life itself could be changed; that men and women could be made better, could be animated by a moral ideal; that a kingdom of heaven could be built in the soul, as a retreat from the gloomy realm of the mechanical and the corporeal. Thus, in his second phase, Tolstoy, as artist, is no longer satisfied with describing life; he tries to give his art an ethical meaning, to subordinate it to a moral task, to devote it to the service of purifying and uplifting the soul. Henceforward his novels and his tales are not merely to image life but to mould it; they are to present prototypes of the right way of acting. A new and desirable type of humanity is to be sharply distinguished from the type of those who have not yet become aware of the truth, and the former is thus to become a model for the latter, to be "educative." The writings are to be something more than

entertaining and descriptive; they are to be "stimulating"; they are to warn the reader by bad example, and to encourage him by good example. The new Tolstoy, not content to be life's recorder, has become its judge.

This doctrinaire trend is already manifest in *Anna Karenina.* On the plane of the unconscious there is still more evident an intention to contrast the respective destinies of the moral and the immoral. Vronsky and Anna, unbelievers, living for the pleasures of the senses, egoists enslaved by their own passions, are "punished," are cast into the purgatorial fires of spiritual unrest. Kitty and Levin, on the other hand, rise to heights of purification. For the first time the author, hitherto incorruptible, takes a side for or against the creatures of his own fancy. He has discovered a moral standard. Henceforward the tendency to underline the articles of his creed, to draw attention to them by the use of notes of exclamation and by quotation marks, this doctrinaire purpose (subsidiary, to begin with), inclines more and more to get the upper hand. At last, in *The Kreutzer Sonata* and in *Resurrection,* the nudity of the sermon is but thinly veiled behind imaginative trappings; and the artist has become subservient to the preacher. By degrees, Tolstoy has ceased to look upon art as an end in itself. Now he can find pleasure in a "pretty lie" only in so far as it serves "truth": and when he talks of truth, he no longer means what he used to mean, a faithful presentation of the actual, a sincere portrayal of a sensual-psychical reality; he means that which, in the days of crisis, has revealed itself to him as higher, as spiritual, as religious truth. Henceforward, when he calls books "good," he is not referring to the most perfectly finished, carefully thought out, and broadly conceived pictures of men and things

that have been limned by writers of genius; he means those which (no matter whether good or bad, artistically speaking) tend to promote the "good cause," those which will help to make men more patient, gentler, more Christian, humaner, kindlier, and more social. That is why he regards the worthy but dull Bertold Auerbach as more important than the "mischievous" Shakespeare. More and more the measuring-rod tends to pass from the hands of Tolstoy the artist into those of Tolstoy the moralist, for whom art is merely an instrument for upbuilding a new religiosity, and not something endowed with a sublime mission of its own.

Art, impatient and jealous like other gods, takes vengeance on apostates. When asked to serve a purpose, when expected to endure subordination to some other deity proclaimed her superior, she impetuously refuses to help even those who have been her favourite disciples. Whenever Tolstoy, abandoning the purposelessness of art, becomes doctrinaire, his characters pale, and are no longer convincing. They wither in the cold, grey light of reason. The reader stumbles over logical prolixities, and wearily gropes his way to the exit. Though the second Tolstoy was wont to speak contemptuously of the writings of the first; to say, under stress of his recently won moral fanaticism, that *Childhood* and *War and Peace* were "bad, futile, useless books," because they provided no more than æsthetic enjoyment, which was (hearken, Apollo!) "enjoyment of a lower kind"—in actual fact, these are his masterpieces, compared with which the preachments of his old age are failures. The more Tolstoy surrenders to the "despotism of morality," the more he departs from the sensuous veracity which is the primal element of his genius to lose himself in a dialectical Cuckoo-Cloudland,

the more does he deteriorate as an artist. Like Antaeus, he derives his strength from contact with Mother Earth. Far on into old age, when, with those diamond-keen eyes of his, he is looking into the sensual world, he remains a writer of genius; but when he gets off the solid ground and soars into a metaphysical empyrean, his talents dwindle painfully. Deplorable in the extreme is it to see him making frantic efforts to wing his way through the realms of the spiritual, this artist foreordained to walk with heavy tread on the hard earth—to till it, to understand it, and to picture it more splendidly than any other writer of our days.

How tragical a discord, perpetually renewed in all works of art and in all ages! A mood of conviction, and a determination to impart that conviction to others, which ought to beautify the work of art, usually frustrate it by belittling the artist. True art is egotistical; it "seeketh but itself to please," and desires nothing in the world save its own perfectionment. The true artist must think only of his work, and must ignore mankind, for whom it is destined. Tolstoy, therefore, is supreme as artist when he is indifferent, dispassionate, unconcerned, incorruptible, neither confused nor led astray by sympathy; when, in this mood, he depicts the world disclosed to him by his senses. When he grows compassionate, when he wants his work to help people, to make them better, to guide them and to teach—then his art ceases to convince, and he himself is fated to become a more pitiful being than any of the creatures of his fancy.

SELF-PORTRAITURE

To know our life, means to know oneself.

TO RUSSANOFF, 1903

CONTEMPLATING the world with pitiless severity, he is no less severe in his contemplation of himself. His nature is one of those which cannot tolerate ambiguity. There must be nothing hazy, nothing obscure, either without or within. Thus, being accustomed as artist to study with precision every detail in his environment, from the shape of a tree to the twitching movements of a frightened dog, he cannot endure that he himself should be a confused medley of uncertain ingredients. It was inevitable, therefore, that from youth upwards his impulse to investigate should be turned upon himself as well as upon the outer world. "I want to know myself through and through," he writes in his diary when he is nineteen years old. Thenceforward until his death at the age of eighty-two, he is ever on the alert, critical and mistrustful, to study the morphology of his own soul. Ruthless towards himself as towards others, he traces the ramifications of every nerve of feeling, dissects every thought when it is still warm from the minting. Not content to feel acutely, he wishes to know himself acutely as well. Tolstoy, a fanatical devotee of truth, cannot fail to be an ardent autobiographer.

But self-portraiture can never, as can depiction of the outer world, be finished once and for all, to attain the finality of objective works of art. The forms of others,

imagined or observed, can be completed by the creator, in that he definitely incorporates them in his work. When the birth has taken place, the navel-string is cut, and the creature enters upon an independent existence, extruded as the new-born infant is extruded from the maternal circulation. By the act of creation, the artist has freed himself from the creature. The ego, on the other hand, can never be cut adrift by the act of representation, for it is perennially mutable, and therefore cannot be contemplated once for all. That is why masters of the art of self-portraiture go on depicting themselves again and again throughout life. Dürer, Rembrandt, Titian—they paint their earliest pictures as they sit before the mirror; and they are still contemplating their own image when the brush drops from the failing hand. A self-portrait is quickly submerged by the flux of time's waters, and these autospective artists want to record the metamorphoses in their physical being no less than the unchanging elements of their bodily form. In like manner Tolstoy, the arch-realist, can never finish the work of self-portraiture. Scarcely has he completed one portrait of himself, as Nehludoff or Besuhoff or Levin, than he finds the picture irrecognizable, and must start afresh to paint the new man he has become. The artist has grasped the shadow of the soul; the substance of the self has eluded him, has winged its way on new flights, in the endeavour to attain the unattainable—and once more Tolstoy, the indefatigable, sets out in pursuit. Thus it is that during sixty years of stupendous labour, he produces no work which does not contain a portrait of himself, nor one in which this portrait is adequate to his complexity. We must study them all, novels and tales and diaries and letters, if we are to get a veracious like-

ness. In the mass they give the most many-sided and most carefully elaborated, the most vigilant and continuous example of self-portraiture achieved by anyone in our own century.

For this man who has no powers of invention, who is competent only to recount the experienced and the perceived, can never exclude himself, the experiencer, the perceiver, from the field of vision. Being egocentric to a degree which arouses his own despair, he cannot forget himself even in moments of ecstasy, cannot transcend the restrictions of self-awareness even under the stress of passion. Not even where he is most in his element, in the free environment of nature, can he escape for a second to merge himself in his surroundings—much as he longs to cease being shadowed by the ego. "I love nature, when she is all around me" (note the "me" and the "I"), "but I must be in her. I love her when the balmy airs enwrap me, and then move onwards into the infinite; when the tender grass-stems, which I press to the ground as I recline on them, tint the broad pastures with their green." We see that for him the most entrancing landscape is no more than radius and circumference of the circle at whose centre the ego is fast fixed; and that, as far as he is concerned, the whole spiritual world revolves for ever around his bodily personality. This does not mean that he was vain in any base sense of the word; that, arrogantly overestimating his own importance, he considered Tolstoy to be the navel of the universe. Despite the intensity of his self-feeling, no one was ever more self-critical. But he was cabined within his own body, was prisoned by his own self-hood, was unable to ignore himself. Since he was wingless, there was withheld from him

that supreme gift of destiny—the ability to outsoar himself, in a dream, in a flight of fancy, in an illusion.

Incessantly, therefore, as if under compulsion, and always in opposition to his conscious will, by day and by night, to the verge of exhaustion and beyond, he had "to keep watch over" his own life, to study it and explain it. Never could his autobiographical frenzy abate, any more than his heart could stop pulsing in his breast, the stream of consciousness cease to flow through his brain; for him the art of the writer was summed up in the endeavour to hold assize upon himself and pass judgment. Consequently, there is no form of self-description which Tolstoy has not practised: simple narration, a purely mechanical record of memories; examination of conscience, moral appraisement, and confession; self-description as a means of self-control and self-incitation; autobiography as an æsthetic and religious exercise—the confusing multiplicity of these types of self-portraiture, some naked and others veiled, almost defies analysis. This much is certain, that just as Tolstoy was the most photographed man of modern days, so also is he more effectively autobiographed than any other. From his diary we know him as thoroughly when he is seventeen as when he is an octogenarian; we learn of his youthful passions, the tragedy of his marriage, his intimate thoughts. These are recorded with the same frankness and accuracy as are trivialities and foolish escapades. In this we see another contrast with Dostoeffsky, who lived "with closed lips," whereas Tolstoy liked to live "with doors and windows always open." Owing to his mania for self-revelation, we know every detail, every episode, of his long life as thoroughly as (from innumerable photographs and sketches) we know his physi-

cal aspect when shoemaking and when talking to the peasants, on horseback and at the ploughtail, at his desk and playing tennis, in the company of wife and friends and grandchildren, asleep and lying dead. Moreover, this vivid portrayal is countersigned by the numberless memoirs and sketches penned by those who came in contact with him; wife and daughter, secretaries, interviewers, and casual visitors. The woods of Yasnaya Polyana, turned into paper, would hardly supply enough for the printing of these memoirs of the lord of the manor. No other writer has ever, of set purpose, made his inner self so widely known to the world; rarely indeed has any been of so communicative a disposition. Since Goethe, no great figure in the world of letters has been pictured with such a wealth of detail by all the arts of subjective and objective description.

Tolstoy's urge to self-observation begins with the dawn of consciousness. It appears in the rosy-skinned infant, making busy but awkward investigatory movements before it has learned to speak; and ends only on the death-bed of the old man of eighty-two, when the failing lips can give vent to nothing more than unmeaning breath. Between the silence that came before the beginning and the silence that followed the end, there was not a moment without speech or writing. At nineteen when he had just left school, Tolstoy bought a diary. On the opening pages we read: "I have never kept a diary before, not seeing the use of it; but now, when I am engaged in developing my faculties, a diary will help me to follow the course of their development; it will contain rules for my life, and in it my future activities must be foreshadowed." Thus in the beardless youth we can already discern the Tolstoy of later days; the world-teacher;

the man who regarded life from beginning to end as a "serious matter," which must be lived accordingly. Like an accountant, he starts by drawing up a balance-sheet, showing debits and credits, promise and performance. This young man is fully aware that his personality is a good asset. He records the fact that he is an "exceptional man," upon whom is imposed an "exceptional task." At the same time, he is under no illusions as to the amount of voluntary energy he will need in order to coerce into moral activities a nature inclined to sloth, to extravagant outbursts, to fits of impatience, and to sensuality. With a sure instinct, this precocious psychologist recognizes his chief dangers, which are typically Russian: those of excess, thriftlessness, waste of time, lack of discipline. He therefore devises an apparatus for the control of his daily doings, so that there may be no void spaces of time. His diary is, first and foremost, to be a stimulus; it must continually help him in the work of self-instruction, and must enable him to read his own heart. Again and again, in these communings, we are reminded of Tolstoy's determination "to keep watch over his own life." Thus unsparingly does the lad summarize the record of one of his days: "From 12 till 2 with Bigitsheff; spoke too openly, vain, self-deceptive. From 2 till 4, gymnastics; little tenacity and patience. From 4 till 6, ate dinner, and made some needless purchases. Did not write home, laziness; could not make up my mind whether I should drive to Volkonsky; said very little there, cowardice. Have behaved badly; cowardice, vanity, heedlessness, weakness, laziness." Thus early and thus ruthlessly does the young man grip himself by the throat, and the grip is not relaxed for the sixty years and more that remain to him of life. At eighty-two, as at nineteen,

Tolstoy has the kourbash ever ready to lacerate his own hide. The diary he keeps in old age still tells us abusively that he had been "cowardly, bad, indolent" when the tired body has failed in discipline, has not succeeded in responding adequately to the Spartan demands of the will. From the beginning to the end, Tolstoy posts sentries in front of his life. Like a Prussian drill-sergeant, a choleric martinet, he endeavours with shouts, menaces, and blows to scare away tendencies toward self-indulgence and to quicken his advance towards the goal.

The artist in Tolstoy was hardly less precocious than the moralist, and was in like manner introspective. At twenty-three he began (and there is no second instance in world literature) a three-volume autobiography. The first thing Tolstoy contemplates as artist is his own image in the mirror. A very young man, knowing little of the world, he is thrown back for materials into the tiny realm of his own experiences, the memories of his still recent years of callowness. With the naïveté of Dürer, who at twelve snatches up the silver-point to sketch his girlish face, still unfurrowed by time, upon the first piece of paper that comes to his hand, Artillery Lieutenant Tolstoy, with the down new-grown on cheeks and chin, fired by the lust of pencraft, sits down in a fortress in the Caucasus to tell of his "Childhood," his "Boyhood," and his "Adolescence." No question as to for whom he may be writing seems to have entered his mind; and still less is he concerned about being printed in a periodical or a book, about publicity of any sort. He acts instinctively, prompted by an urge towards self-enlightenment by self-description. The prompting is blind, is not clarified by any conscious aim; nor is it illuminated by what he will in later years insist upon as the justification for art, "the light of a moral

demand." The young officer's action is purely impulsive. Curious as to the possibilities of life, and more than a little bored by the life he is actually leading, he devotes himself, in the spirit of an amateur, to the task of sketching his home and his childhood. He knows nothing as yet of the revivalist spirit which will overpower him in later years; he does not speak of "confessing his sins," of a conversion "to the good"; he does not aspire to depict the "abominations of his youth" as a warning to others. Not wishing to "do good" to anyone, he is moved solely by the sportiveness of a youth who is still half boy, the sum of whose experiences concerns the way in which he "has glided on out of being a little child" into being a young man. In this mood he describes his first impressions, his father, his mother, and his other relatives, his tutor, human beings in general, animals, the world of nature; and he is successful, thanks to the splendid frankness which none but the purposeless can know. How different is this carefree narration from the serious and analytic soundings of Leo Tolstoy when he has become an author animated with a conscious intention, one who feels it incumbent upon him to show himself to the world as a penitent, to artists as an artist, to God as a sinner, and to himself as a model of humility. The youthful autobiographer is nothing more than a young man of birth and breeding who has no taste for spending the whole of his evenings at the card-table, and who (feeling a trifle homesick in this remote and unfamiliar place) wishes to warm his heart by contemplating in imagination those whom he cannot now see in the flesh.

When the unexpected happens, when this artless and purposeless autobiography brings him fame, Leo Tolstoy does not write the anticipated sequel, "Manhood"; the well-known author cannot recapture the tone of the un-

known scribbler. Not even at the climax of his powers does the master craftsman succeed in limning another self-portrait so expressive as the first. For insofar as an artist gains recognition, he loses something that is irrecoverable, the ingenuousness of self-communing on the part of one who has no thought of being watched and overheard, and has no ulterior aim; he forfeits a childlike candour which is possible only in the darkness of anonymity. In every writer except those who are hopelessly corrupted by literary success, there begins when success comes an intensification of spiritual bashfulness. The elements in his nature that demand privacy must hide behind a mask, lest a pose of theatricality or an assumption of falseness should distort the sincerity which can exist unmasked and unalloyed in those alone to whom fame, with its buzz of the world's curiosity, has never come. Therefore in the case of Tolstoy (whose life-history has the breadth of a Russian landscape) half a century must elapse before the artist systematically devotes himself to self-portraiture in pursuance of the scheme debonairly initiated in youth. Now, thanks to his religious bent since the crisis, the aim is a new one. Autobiography has acquired a moral, a pedagogic purpose. He does not write in order that he may learn to know himself; he wants his self-portraiture to instruct and convert the world. "Every man can gain a great deal for himself by writing as faithful a description as possible to his own life, and he cannot fail thereby to do much good to his fellows." In these weighty terms does he herald his undertaking, and the octogenarian makes elaborate preparations for what is to be the justification of his latter-day outlooks. But hardly has he begun the memorial than he desists from it, though he tells us that he still considers "such a perfectly faithful autobiography more use-

ful . . . than the artistic chatter which fills the twelve volumes of my works, to which my contemporaries ascribe a quite unmerited importance."

His standard of sincerity has grown with increasing knowledge of his own existence. He has come to recognize that truth is mutable, can be variously interpreted, and is of abysmal depth. Thus, whereas the young man of twenty-three skied swiftly and unconcernedly across the smooth surface of the snow, the old man, deliberately questing for truth and equipped with an anxious sense of responsibility, hesitates and shrinks back in alarm. He is troubled by "the inadequacies and the unfairnesses which inevitably creep into an autobiography"; is afraid lest "such an autobiography, even if it were not directly falsified, might become equivalent to a lie owing to the display of false lights, owing to a deliberate thrusting of good points to the front while keeping bad points in the background." He frankly admits: "Furthermore, when I had made up my mind to describe the naked truth, and not to gloss over any of the badness of my life, I grew alarmed at the thought of the effect which such an autobiography could not fail to have." Tolstoy the moralist, the man who is concerned with the effect of his actions upon others, grows more and more convinced that there is no safe and upright course to be steered "between the Charybdis of selfishness and the Scylla of excessive frankness." Having planned to write an account of his own life which should reveal "all its baseness and shamefulness," which was to be an autobiography penned "from the standpoint of good and evil," he realizes that the plainspeaking would be too dangerous, and renounces the undertaking precisely because he has so much veneration for absolute sincerity. We need not greatly deplore the

loss, for the writings of this period (*My Confession*, for instance) show that from the time of the religious crisis onwards Tolstoy's craving for sincerity took the form of longing for self-abasement, a flagellant's lust for self-castigation, so that what he regarded as "frankness" concerning his own thoughts and actions had become tantamount to a persistent vilification of himself. The Tolstoy of the closing years did not want to describe himself to men, but to humiliate himself before men, wanted to tell them things which he was ashamed to admit even to himself. We are therefore entitled to assume that this definitive autobiography, with its trumpeting of alleged basenesses and its pillorying of reputed sins, would have been a caricature.

Besides, what need have we of formal autobiography when, as already said, Tolstoy (like Goethe) writes the fullest and most truthful of autobiographies in the complex of his works? The novels and the tales contain perfectly recognizable portraits of their author in every phase of his career. His double stalks through the pages. In *The Cossacks*, Lieutenant Olenin, who runs away from melancholy and idleness in Moscow to seek refuge in his profession and in the arms of nature, is, down to every thread of his attire and every line of his face, Artillery Captain Tolstoy. Look at the meditative and dejected Count Besuhoff in *War and Peace*, and at Squire Levin, the seeker after God, the man greatly troubled about the meaning of existence, in *Anna Karenina;* in both you have Tolstoy shortly before the crisis, drawn to the life. Who can fail to see, hidden under the cowl of Father Sergius, the famous author's own struggle for holiness? What reader of *Devil* can fail to perceive in that work a study of the ageing Tolstoy's resistance to the promptings of the

flesh? Prince Nehludoff, the most remarkable of all the creatures of his fancy, stalking symbolically through many books, is the ideal Tolstoy, the author as he would fain be, the mirror of his conscience, the man to whom he ascribes his own intentions, and upon whose shoulders he unloads the burden of his own moral deeds. Saryntseff, in *And the Light Shineth in the Darkness*, wears so thin a mask, and the drama is so full of the atmosphere of Tolstoy's domestic tragedy, that every actor who plays the title-role makes himself up as an impersonation of the author. A nature so comprehensive as Tolstoy's had perforce to be distributed among a number of fictional personalities. We have to piece it together again, to assemble it out of the parts scattered in many books; when we have done so, the writer's entity is unmistakable. That is why anyone who reads Tolstoy's novels and tales, anyone who does this while keeping his wits about him, can dispense with biographical details. No outside observer could give us so clear a picture as we get in Tolstoy's self-observations. He reveals the most perilous of his conflicts, discloses the most hidden of his feelings. Tolstoy's prose, like Goethe's verse, is a general confession, in which picture supplements picture, unceasingly, throughout a long life.

This continuity it is, and nothing else, that raises Tolstoy's writings as a whole into the highest rank of self-portraiture, and makes them supreme in this respect as far as prose works are concerned. Casanova writes memoirs once and for all; Stendhal is fragmentary; but Tolstoy, inseparable as a shadow, glides at the heels of the figures in his books for the whole of his literary career. Of course every artist uses the same method at times; every artist is familiar with the urge to incorporate himself among the creatures of his fancy. The poiete, the being who is

burdened with more destinies than his own, the being whom every experience fertilizes and makes heavy with child, hands on to the children he bears both the ecstasies that thrill him and the crises that transform him. But whereas most writers do this once only, presenting themselves to the public in one impersonation (Stendhal as Fabrice, Gottfried Keller in *Der grüne Heinrich*, Joyce as Stephen Dedalus), Tolstoy shows himself to us each decade in a new form. We do not know him in a fixed and final presentation. We know him as child and boy, as light-hearted lieutenant, as happy bridegroom, as the Saul and Paul of the days of crisis, as warrior and half-saint, as old man who has attained clarity of vision and tranquillity of mind; always varying, and yet ever the same; a cinematographic portrait in a continuous flux, instead of a rigid and immutable photograph.

In addition to the pictorial series, we have, as a magnificent supplement, the author's conceptual self-supervision in the form of diaries and letters, continued day by day and hour by hour till death claims him. The result is that there is scarcely an unexplored region in the vast extent of his existence. His social experiences, his private life, his epic and other literary activities, his wrestlings with physical and metaphysical problems—all are exhaustively discussed. And because Tolstoy, despite his extraordinariness, despite his seemingly superhuman qualities, was (like Goethe) thoroughly normal, healthy, well-balanced, anything but pathological; because he was a perfect specimen of human kind, a model of mental and bodily equilibrium; because he was an archetypal and universal figure—we feel of him (once more, just as we feel of Goethe) that the existence he has recorded for us so faithfully is an epitome of human life.

CRISIS AND TRANSFORMATION

The most important incident in a man's life is the moment when he becomes aware of his ego. The consequences of this incident may be most beneficial or most terrible.

NOVEMBER, 1898

To creative activity, every danger becomes a boon, every hindrance a help and an advantage, for it generates and regenerates unknown forces. If a life is to have an effect upon the world, it must not stand still, for mental creative force, no less than bodily, springs from variety and transformation; there can be nothing more dangerous to an imaginative writer than contentment, mechanical labour, and a smooth course. Once only in his career did Tolstoy pass through such a phase of self-forgetting relaxation—so happy for the man, so perilous for the artist. Once only, on its pilgrimage, does his restless spirit allow itself a period of repose. For sixteen years out of his two-and-eighty, from the time of his wedding until he has finished the novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy is content with himself and his work. For thirteen years, from 1865 to 1878, even the diary, the warder of his conscience, is dumb. Tolstoy, happily immersed in the task of composition, is no longer watching himself, and is satisfied with watching the world. He does not ask why he is engaged in creative activity, why he procreates seven children and produces the two greatest

of his books. During this peaceful interlude, and then only, he lives free from care like any other man, enjoying the respectable egoism of family life, delighted at being freed from the torment of questioning. "I no longer brood over my position (brooding is done with), and I do not burrow into my own sentiments; in my relations with my family, it is enough for me to feel, and I do not reflect. Hence I have an unwonted amount of spiritual freedom." The stream of creative thought is no longer checked by introspection. The inexorable sentry who watches over his moral ego has gone to sleep for a while, so that the artist has freedom of movement, unrestricted play for his senses.

During these years, he becomes famous; his worldly wealth is quadrupled; he educates his children and enlarges his house. But lasting content with an existence of this kind is impossible to a man of Tolstoy's temperament. Fame cannot satisfy him, and he cannot bask in the sunshine of wealth. From the work of objective creation, he must in the end turn back to his task of self-perfectionment; and since no god summons him to a life of affliction, he sets out in search of it himself. Since no tragical fate is imposed on him from without, he will fashion it for himself from within. Life must be ever on the wing; above all, so mighty a life as his. If the outward sources of destiny cease to flow, new springs gush forth within the spirit, that the circulation of existence may be maintained. That which happened to Tolstoy when he was verging on fifty, that which seemed inexplicable to many of his contemporaries, namely his sudden turning away from art and towards religion, must not be regarded as abnormal. There are no abnormalities in the development of this healthy being. The only unusual thing about

the process is its intensity, characteristic of Tolstoy. The transformation which took place in him during the fiftieth year of his life was one which happens to us all, though in most persons it may escape notice. What happened was nothing more than the inevitable adaptation of the bodily organism to the approach of old age, the climacteric change which occurs in artists just as in other men.

"Life stood still and grew sinister"—it is thus that he formulates the beginning of the crisis. At fifty he has reached the "dead point" where the formative capacity of the plasma begins to decline, and the soul tends to grow rigid. No longer can the senses knead the clay with the old creative energy; at the time when the hair is turning grey, impressions from the outer world begin to lose their vivid tints. Now opens that second epoch, which we can study also in the self-revelations of Goethe; the epoch when the play of the senses yields place to conceptual activities, when object becomes phenomenon, when the image grows into a symbol, when the longing to create a world full of light and colour becomes transformed into a longing to effect a crystal-clear classification of thoughts. This rebirth transforms the mind, and likewise brings about a measure of bodily discomfort, arousing an uneasy sense that a stranger, perhaps an enemy, is approaching. A chill feeling of anxiety, a terrible dread of impoverishment, takes possession of the disquieted soul; and thereupon the body, like a sensitive seismograph, records the tremors which show that an earthquake is at hand. Meanwhile (and here we enter a region which is still imperfectly explored), what time the soul is as yet unable to foresee the precise nature of this attack out of the darkness and can only shiver at the premonition of danger, the organism has already begun spontaneously to arm in self-

defence, and in the psycho-physical domain nature has begun to take her precautions without any knowledge of the matter on the part of the person most concerned and without any exertion of his conscious will. Just as in the lower animals, before the winter cold begins, the body protects itself by a thickening of the fur, so does the human spirit, at the first approach of old age and when the zenith of life has been barely past, provide itself with a new protective covering against the chill epoch of decline. This profound change, proceeding from the bodily into the spiritual, originating perhaps in the cells of the glands but making its influence felt in the remotest vibrations of creative production, this climacteric epoch which I may term the age of antipuberty, manifests itself like the age of puberty (equally determined by changes in the blood, and equally assuming the aspect of a crisis) in the form of a mental and spiritual disturbance. In this field there is much work still to be done by physiologists, psychologists, and psycho-analysts; for neither the underlying bodily changes nor the resulting mental transformations have as yet been adequately studied. In the case of women, indeed, seeing that in them the changes in question are more obvious and palpable, we are somewhat better informed; but as regards men we still grope in the dark. This much is certain, that the climacteric of the male is almost invariably the period of great conversions, of religious and poetic and rational sublimations, which are derivatives for the sense that the animal being is less richly blooded than of yore; they are a substitute for reduced bodily sensuality, an intensification of world-feeling at the cost of self-feeling, a substitute for the lowered intensity in life's potential. The complement of puberty (no less dangerous in the weakly, no less vehement in the vehe-

ment, no less productive in the productive), this climacteric in the male inaugurates a new type of creative work.

In the life-history of every noted artist, we discover this critical phase; but in no other does it show itself with such earthquaking, volcanic, and almost annihilating impetuosity as in Tolstoy. No one else has disclosed so plainly as this man of energetic and normal temperament Everyman's universal dread at the restriction of life's possibilities, universal horror at the impending abatement in creative faculty. For the very reason that his senses have been so vigorous, and that thanks to this he has been able to create so abundantly, he feels the first threat of a decline in their powers as the imminence of doom, as the menace of annihilation. If we look at the matter objectively, realistically, we see that what happens to Tolstoy in his fiftieth year is nothing more than what is proper to his age. He feels that he is getting older. He loses some of his teeth; his memory is not so trustworthy as it used to be; his thoughts are less brilliantly clear. Every man of fifty is familiar with these symptoms. But Tolstoy, whose virility has been so exceptional, whose physical and mental energies have been so exuberant, is more than common alarmed by the first touch of autumn, feels withered, and ripe for death. He says: "How can one go on living when one is no longer intoxicated with life?" Neurasthenic depression and a sense of utter weakness assail him, so that he is ready to lay down his arms and capitulate at the first assault. He can neither write nor think. "Mentally speaking, I have gone to sleep and cannot wake up; I feel out of sorts, and am in low spirits." Till he can finish *Anna Karenina,* he must drag it after him like a chain, and he now finds the book "tedious and commonplace." His hair turns grey, his brow is furrowed, his digestion will

not work properly, and his limbs are feeble. Brooding, he says: "I can no longer take delight in anything; I have nothing more to expect from life; I shall soon be dead. . . . With all my energy, I turn away from life." Just after this, his diary speaks of the "fear of death." A few days later, he writes: "Il faudra mourir seul." I have already shown how to this man of outstanding vitality, death is the most gruesome of all spectres. That is why he crumples up so pitifully when he detects a few weak spots in his armour.

Nevertheless, the man of genius who is thus diagnosing his own illness is not wholly wrong when, snuffing the air, he scents carrion. Part of the original Tolstoy perishes once for all in this crisis. Not the man in full vigour; but the free-spirited and unreflecting artist, who took the world as he found it, and regarded it as part of himself, as a huge extension of his own body. Hitherto Tolstoy had never questioned the universe as to its significance. He had contemplated it as an artist looks at his model, and had watched phenomena with the delight of a child. Whenever he had wished to describe them, they had yielded themselves to his will, had allowed him to caress them, to take them into his creative hands. Now, when mistrust has arisen in his mind, this objective contemplation and unquestioning record of life has become impossible. The communion between subjective and objective has been broken. An abyss has yawned between the world and the ego. Things no longer come to him confidently, no longer give themselves to him unreservedly. He feels that they are hiding something from him; that a shadow, a question, a gloomy and unnamable peril, lurks in the background. For the first time, this man of lucid vision feels that existence is a mystery; has inklings of a mean-

ing which cannot be grasped by the senses. He becomes aware that, for the perception of what is hidden in the background, he needs a new instrument, an eye that is conscious, a thinker's eye. The items in his environment have put on unfamiliar hues; indeed, there are no longer any items, there is nothing that exists apart. Everything has an enigmatic relation to a community that eludes him. In every phenomenon he is now constrained to seek for a moral purport, and even the things that are most remote have to be considered as interwoven with his own destiny.

A few examples will help throw light upon this inward transformation.—In his campaigning days, Tolstoy had seen hundreds of men killed, and had never questioned the right or the wrong of the matter. In his books, he had described their deaths with an artist's objectivity, or with the impassivity of a scientific observer who records the images cast on his retina. Now, on a visit to France, he sees an execution by guillotine, and thereupon his whole nature rises in revolt against mankind.—As barin, as lord of the manor, Count Tolstoy had ridden a thousand times past the peasants on his estate, and, while the hoofs of his galloping horse bespatter them with mud or powder them with dust, he has taken their servile greetings as a matter of course. Now, of a sudden, he begins to notice that they go barefoot, are poverty-stricken, timid, cut off from human rights; and he questions his own right to ignore their misery and their ceaseless toil.—Times without number, driving in a sleigh through the streets of Moscow, he has sped past rows of shivering beggars without even turning his head to look at them. Poverty, wretchedness, oppression, soldiering, prisons, Siberia, have been to him facts as natural as that snow should fall in winter and that rivers should flow seaward.

Now, when a census is being taken, the newly awakened man realizes that the deplorable situation of the proletariat is an accusation levelled against his own superfluity in this world's goods.

Since he can no longer regard mankind as material "for study and observation"; since his fellowmen have become brothers whose existence imposes duties on him; since the louring figure of death has warned him of his own mortality—the life of quiet contemplation has been shattered. He can no longer look upon existence as a mere spectacle, but must persistently inquire as to the meaning and counter-meaning, the rights and the wrongs, of everything that happens. He cannot envisage humanity from an egocentric, an introverted standpoint, but must regard things socially, in a brotherly spirit, as an extravert. Awareness of his kinship with everyone and everything has "seized" him like an illness. "One must not think," he groans; "it is too painful." Now that the eyes of conscience are open, the sorrows of mankind, the primal misery of the world, will henceforward be his most intimate concern. Out of his horror of the Nothing, there emerges a new and eerie creative attitude towards the All. The spirit of complete surrender urges on the artist to the task of building his world anew, as a moral edifice this time. Saved from death's menace, he now enjoys the miracle of rebirth; and there comes into being that Tolstoy whom the world honours as artist and as the most human of men.

To begin with, in that agonizing hour of collapse, in that uncertain moment before the "awakening" (as Tolstoy subsequently, when he had found consolation, terms this period of disquietude), the man who has been thus taken by surprise does not foresee that a healing trans-

formation is nigh. Before he has been granted the new kind of vision, before the eye of conscience has opened, he feels blind, environed by chaos and the darkness of night. His world has broken up, and, paralysed with terror, he stares into the unmeaning gloom. "Wherefore live, seeing that life is so horrible?" he asks, in the undying question of Ecclesiastes. Why trouble to plough, when death reaps the harvest? Despairingly, in this crypt-like world, he gropes his way along the walls, endeavouring to find an outlet, to see a ray of light, a sparkle from the star of hope. When at length he realizes that no one outside is going to extend a helping hand or to throw a gleam of light on a way of escape, he sets to work systematically, that he may mine a passage, foot by foot. In 1879 he writes the following "unknown questions" on a sheet of paper:

(a) Wherefore live?
(b) What is the cause of my existence and of everyone else's?
(c) What is the purpose of my existence and of everyone else's?
(d) What is the meaning of the cleavage into good and evil which I feel within myself, and why does it exist?
(e) How ought I to live?
(f) What is death—how can I save myself?

"How can I save myself? How ought I to live?" A cry of anguish, a cry from the depths of the heart, a cry which Tolstoy will continue to send forth until his lips are closed by death. He no longer believes the glad tidings brought to him by his senses; art gives no solace, the heedlessness of earlier years has vanished; the intoxication of youth has been succeeded by a cruel sobriety; from

all sides coldness radiates out of the abyss of mortality, out of the invisible realm of death which surrounds life. How can I save myself? More insistent and more poignant grows the cry. How can he believe that what appears to be unmeaning is really so—though the meaning he is in search of will not be one he can touch with the fingers, see with the eyes, know with the intellect, but will be a meaning that dwells beyond and above truth? For the intellect suffices only to give knowledge of life, and cannot give knowledge of death. The man who had been a nihilist has come to feel that a new kind of power is requisite for the comprehension of the incomprehensible. Since this unbeliever cannot find this power in himself—overcome by terror, overwhelmed by anxiety, he humbly kneels before God, contemptuously casts aside the worldly knowledge which has filled him with rejoicing for fifty years, and impetuously prays for faith: "Give me faith, Lord, and let me help others to find it."

THE ARTIFICIAL CHRISTIAN

Ah me, how hard it is to live only in God's sight—to live as men have lived when lowered into a shaft, knowing that they would never get out of it, and that no one would ever learn how they had lived there. But one must, one must live like that, for only such a life is a life. Help me, Lord.

DIARY, NOVEMBER, 1900

"GRANT me faith, Lord," cries Tolstoy despairingly to the God he has hitherto denied. This God, it would seem, does not show indulgence towards those who seek him impetuously, instead of waiting humbly until his will is revealed to them. For Tolstoy brings impatience, his besetting sin, into the field of religion. He is not content to ask for faith. He must have it instantly, all complete, hafted like an axe, so that he can use it to clear away the thicket of his doubts. This nobleman is accustomed to servants who jump to obey his nod; he has been spoiled, too, by those keen senses of his, which have been wont in the twinkling of an eye to convey to him all the knowledge of the world. He is a passionate, capricious, self-willed man; such persons can never wait patiently. He will not be satisfied to wait, like a devout monk, abiding the time when the light will begin to shed its ray on him from above. He wants the full glare of day to shine instantly into his tenebrous soul. With one leap, his mettlesome spirit, unhindered by obstacles, is to press forward

to the "meaning of life," is to "know God," to "think God," as he expresses it almost arrogantly. Faith, the imitation of Christ, humility, absorption into the essence of God—these things he expects to learn as easily and swiftly as, though his hair is grey, he now learns Greek and Hebrew. He is to become an accomplished pedagogue, theologian, sociologist within six months, or at any rate within a year.

But how can he who does not already bear within himself the seeds of faith discover faith thus suddenly? How can a man betwixt night and morning become sympathetic, kindly, humble, gentle as a good Franciscan, when for fifty years he has appraised the world with the aloofness of a man of science, when he is a nihilist of the Russian type, when to him the most important thing has ever been himself? How can a will of adamant be transformed in a hand's turn into an accommodating love of mankind? Where can such a self-centred person learn the faith that will enable him to lose himself, and to undergo absorption into a higher, a superhuman power? "Surely," says Tolstoy, to himself, "from those who already have such a faith, or say they have, from Mother Church, who for two thousand years has worn Christ's signet!"

Instantly (for he will not brook a moment's delay), Leo Tolstoy drops on his knees before the ikons; he fasts, makes pilgrimage to monasteries, argues with popes and bishops, and flutters the pages of the gospels. For three years, he tries to be orthodox; but the incense-laden air of the churches strikes chill into a soul that is already shivering with cold. Soon, disillusioned once for all with orthodoxy, he shuts the doors behind him. The Church, he finds, is not in possession of the true faith; nay, rather, the Church has allowed the waters of life to

dry up or run away; in the Church, the teachings of religion have been falsified.

He seeks elsewhere. Perhaps the philosophers will know more about this mysterious "meaning of life." At once, with berserker rage, Tolstoy, whose thoughts have never before been concerned with suprasensual matters, begins to read helter-skelter the writings of the philosophers of all ages, gulping down their words far too rapidly to digest their meaning. He begins with Schopenhauer, ever the chosen companion of those whose minds have been overcast with gloom; goes back to Socrates and Plato; gives Mohammed a turn; tries Confucius and Lao-tse; studies the mystics, the stoics, the sceptics; reads Nietzsche. He closes their books. They, too, have no other means of studying the universe than the one he has himself been using all these years, the keen, laboriously contemplative understanding; they, too, are questioners rather than knowers; they, too, are striving towards God, and have not yet found rest in God. They create systems for the mind, but do not bring peace to a troubled soul; they bestow knowledge, but do not give solace.

Then, like a sick man who can get no help from the accredited practitioners, and therefore gives the herbalists and the village wiseacres a trial, Tolstoy, who has the best intelligence of all the Russians of his day, turns in the sixth decade of his life to the peasants, to the "folk," that from them, the unlearned, he may learn the true faith, may draw wisdom from the sources of unwisdom. They, the unlearned, who have never been confused or corrupted by the written word; they, the poor and afflicted, who toil uncomplainingly, and who, when their hour comes, slink into a corner to die like dumb beasts; they, who do not doubt because they do not think, because they

are endowed with sancta simplicitas—they must have a secret which enables them without a murmur to bow their necks beneath the iron yoke of poverty. They, in their stupidity, must know something which is hidden from the keen intelligence of the wise, something thanks to which, though backward in matters of reason, they are leaders in the world of the soul. "The way we live is wrong, and the way they live is right." That is why God shines visibly out of their patient existence, while those who have nothing better than a "vain, voluptuous greed for knowledge" have turned away from the true source of light, which is in the heart. Had they not a solace of their own, had they not a magical amulet, they could not so cheerfully, so light-heartedly endure an existence as pitiful as theirs. Thinking these thoughts, the impatient and unruly man lusts to discover this arcanum of the simple. From them, from them alone, from "God's own people," Tolstoy is now convinced that he will learn the secret of how to live "rightly," will learn the art of patient self-surrender to a harsh life and a still harsher death.

Let him enter into communion with them, get into close touch with their life, that he may pluck the divine mystery from them! Off with the gentleman's coat and on with the peasant's smock; away from the table that is laden with costly viands and useless books. Henceforward he will nourish himself on innocent herbs and bland milk, and will learn humility, the wisdom of the simple. In this spirit he now sets to work, Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, lord of Yasnaya Polyana and other manors, the author whose writings have made him lord of millions of readers. He drives the plough; shoulders the cask in which water is carried from the well; toils indefatigably in the harvest-field side by side with his own peasants. The hand which

wrote *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace* now devotes itself to cutting out and stitching shoes, to the handling of duster and broom, to the making of garments. Swiftly, swiftly, let him get into close contact with his "brothers." Leo Tolstoy hopes to become one of the "folk," and thus to make himself a true Christian. He goes into the village, to foregather there with those who are still little more than serfs, and who still, when he draws near, pull off their caps from force of habit. He summons them to his house, where, in their heavy boots, they stump awkwardly and timidly across the polished floor, and draw a breath of relief when they find that the barin, "His Worship," has no complaint to make of them, and does not, as they had feared, propose to raise their rents. How strange, he wants to talk to them about God, always about God! They scratch their heads, perplexed. The good fellows remember that the count had had a fad of this kind once before. For a whole year, until he wearied of it, he had taught the youngsters in the school. What can he be up to now? They listen to him suspiciously, for in truth this nihilist disguised as a peasant can hardly fail to seem a government spy to these members of the "folk" when he is trying to learn the secret of their humility, to discover the key of their faith, to learn from them what he must learn if he is to be successful in the campaign leading to God.

But the revelations of the peasants are of use only to art and to the artist. The best of Tolstoy's writings are embellished with the results of these rural conversations, and henceforward his phrasing is vivified and strengthened by peasant metaphors. The wisdom of the simple is not to be learned. When *Anna Karenina* was published, Dostoeffsky clairvoyantly said concerning Levin, the

impersonation of Tolstoy in that novel: "Such men as Levin may live with the folk as long as they please, but they can never become part of the folk. No powers of determination, of will, or of imagination will enable a man to accomplish his object in going down among the people." The brilliant visionary hits the bull's-eye, pierces to the core of the Tolstoyan metamorphosis, discloses the true nature of the artificial Christianity of a man who, in desperation and not from love, in bitter spiritual need and not from spontaneous brotherliness, has gone down among the people. Tolstoy the intellectual may put on peasant attire and may do his utmost to assume the dull mentality of a peasant, but he will never be able to rid himself of the wide experience which has given him his specific outlook on the universe, will never be able to animate his body with a peasant's soul, will never reduce the mentality of one who has been searching for truth decade after decade to the simpler mentality, to the implicit faith, of a genuine son of the soil.

It does not suffice to throw oneself into a cell, like Verlaine, and to pray: "Mon Dieu, donne-moi de la simplicité." This alone will not make humility ripen in the heart. Faith must be something lived and experienced; one cannot merely "profess" it. Neither a union with the common people by the bonds of sympathy, nor yet the appeasement of conscience by a genuine religious sentiment, can be made to irradiate the soul by some such simple process as turning an electric switch. Wearing a peasant smock, drinking kvass, mowing crops—these outward forms of equalization with the tillers of the soil can easily be adopted, without a moment's delay. But a Boeotian dullness of mind cannot be assumed at will; the intelligence cannot be lowered as one lowers a gas-flame.

Luminosity and alertness of mind are inalienable treasures; they dominate the will, and cannot be dominated thereby; and they assert themselves all the more vigorously when they feel that their sovereignty is threatened. Just as little as any spiritualistic legerdemain can equip us with knowledge transcending the inborn possibilities of experience, just so little can the intellect take a step back towards simplicity at the prompting of a sudden decision.

It was impossible that Tolstoy, a man of keen and far-reaching intelligence, should not speedily recognize that a damping down of his spiritual complexity to become complacent simplicity was beyond the powers even of such a will as his. In later years he said: "The attempt to constrain the spirit is like the attempt to catch a sunbeam; shut it up as tight as you please, it will always find its way out." In the long run he could not fail to be aware that his stubborn, contentious, overbearing intelligence made enduring humility impossible to him. Nor did the peasants ever really accept him as one of themselves, though he wore their dress and adopted their habits. As for the world at large, it merely considered him to be dressing up, and did not believe that there could be a genuine transformation of his mind. His closest associates, his wife, his children, the other members of his household, and his real friends (not the professional Tolstoyans), contemplated with uneasiness this attempt on his part to force himself into an environment that was unnatural to him. Turgenieff, writing on his deathbed, appealed to the "greatest of Russian writers" to return to the world of art. Countess Tolstoy, the victim of her husband's spiritual struggles, remarked to him at this time: "You used to say you were uneasy because you had no faith. Why, then, are you not happy now, when you say you have found

it?" The argument was simple and unanswerable. There is nothing to show that Tolstoy, after his conversion to the folk-God, had thereby attained peace of mind, the power to rest in the bosom of his newly found deity. On the contrary, whenever he speaks of his new doctrine, we cannot but feel that he is trying to hide the unsteadiness of his faith by vociferating that naught can shake his conviction. During the days that followed the conversion, all Tolstoy's sayings and doings had a disagreeable stridency. There was something ostentatious, forced, cantankerous, bigoted about them. His Christianity brayed like a trumpet, his humility strutted like a peacock. Anyone with a fine ear could detect in the exaggerations of his abasement the old note of Tolstoyan arrogance, could discern the pride which had assumed the mask of humility. Read the famous passage in his confession where he is endeavouring to "prove" his conversion by vilifying his life of earlier days: "I killed men in war, I fought duels, I squandered at the gaming table the money extorted from the peasants and I oppressed them cruelly, I went awhoring, after light women, and betrayed men. Lying, theft, adultery, all kinds of drunkenness and bestiality, every possible infamy, did I commit; there is no crime which cannot be laid to my charge." Lest any should excuse his offences on the ground that he is an artist, he goes on to say: "During these days I began to scribble, moved thereto by vanity, greed, and arrogance. In pursuit of fame and wealth, I repressed the good in my nature, and wallowed in sin."

A terrible confession, this; heart-rending in its moral pathos! Nevertheless, to speak frankly, has anyone ever really despised Leo Tolstoy because, in war time, he discharged his duties as artillery officer; because, being a

man of strong passions, he lived in his bachelor days the life led by other young men of his class; did anyone else ever look upon him as he looked upon himself, "a vile and sinful person," as a "louse"? Have we not a feeling that he protests too much? Can we fail to surmise that one expressing such excessive penitence, such arrogant humility, is inventing sins? Are we not forced to suspect that a soul yearning to bear testimony is assuming the burden of non-existent crimes as a way of "taking up the cross"? Are we not forced to suspect that in this way Tolstoy is trying to "prove" his Christian humility? Does not the urgent desire for such proof, so convulsive a parade of self-vilification, imply that there is no real humility, assured and equable, in this tortured soul? Do we not actually sense the existence of a dangerously perverted vanity? As soon as the first uncertain spark of faith begins to glow within him, the impatient convert is eager to set the whole of mankind ablaze with it, like the Germanic chiefs of long ago who, before the drops of baptismal water had dried on their heads, seized axes to hew down the sacred oaks, and hastened with fire and sword to fall upon their unconverted neighbours. With leaps and bounds, with titanic energy, Tolstoy storms onward towards the faith; but there is nothing to show that he has really attained it. For, if faith signifies rest in God, and if to be a Christian means to lead a life full of tranquillity, then this man fired with splendid impatience was never a believer, this man glowing with discontent was never a Christian. Not unless we term an unquenchable thirst for religiosity, religion, and not unless we call a burning desire for God, Christlike, must this seeker after God be numbered among the faithful.

For the very reason that he was only half successful in

his quest, for the very reason that he never achieved real conviction, Tolstoy's crisis passes beyond the bounds of an individual experience to become a memorable example, teaching us that even the most iron-willed of men is unable to alter his primary disposition, unable, by any outburst of energy, to transform himself into his opposite. Our inherited disposition may be bettered in certain directions, may be modified or intensified. A moral passion may incite us to improve ourselves by deliberate effort. But it is impossible to erase the fundamental lineaments of character, or to rebuild body and mind upon a new architectural plan. When Tolstoy tells us that we can "wean ourselves from selfishness as from tobacco," or that love can be "conquered," faith "compelled," we note in contradiction the modest results in these directions he himself achieved at the cost of frenzied endeavour. There is no evidence to show that Tolstoy, the violent, unsympathetic, and nihilistic observer, the choleric being "whose eyes flashed at the least hint of contradiction," became in a moment a kindly, gentle, affectionate, socially disposed Christian, a "servant of God," and "brother" to all those he termed his brethren. No doubt his "transformation" had brought about a change in his outlooks, his opinions, his words; but not in his nature. After the "awakening," as before, his uneasy spirit was overshadowed, gloomy, prone to self-torment. Tolstoy was not born to be contented. For the very reason that he was so headstrong, God would not immediately "grant" him the gift of faith; and during the thirty years that followed the crisis, down to the last hour of his life, he had to continue the struggle. His Damascus was not over and done with in a night, nor yet in a year. To the end, Tolstoy found no answer that would satisfy him, no faith in which

he could rest. To the last moment of his life, he felt life to be a mystery.

Thus his leap towards God fell short. But the artist who is unable to cross a gulf has always one resource. He can project his own need into humanity at large, thus universalizing it. In this way Tolstoy rises above the selfish cry of terror, "what will happen to me?" to ask, "what will happen to us?" Unable to convince himself, he wants to persuade others. Unable to change himself, he tries to change mankind. Such has ever been the origin of religion. These great endeavours to better the world have arisen (Nietzsche knew it well) out of an individual's "flight from himself." A storm-tossed soul, seeking relief from the question that tortures it, generalizes that question, transforming a personal unrest into a worldwide unrest. Tolstoy, the passionate man who could have no illusions, the man whose heart was consumed with doubt, never succeeded in becoming a pious Christian after the Franciscan model; but his intimate knowledge of the torment of unfaith led him to attempt more earnestly and persistently than any other of our day to save the world from the abyss of nihilism, to make the world more believing than he himself was ever able to become. "The only refuge from despair is to project one's ego into the world." Tolstoy's questing ego writes large the terrible problems which assail it, that they may serve as warning and instruction for all mankind.

DOCTRINE

> *I have come close to a great idea, to whose realization I could devote the whole of my life. This idea is the foundation of a new religion, the religion of Christ, freed from articles of faith and from miracles.*
>
> DIARY IN YOUTH, MARCH 5, 1855

As foundation stone of his doctrine, of his "message" to mankind, Tolstoy takes the text, "Resist not evil," and gives it the arresting interpretation, "Resist not evil by force."

The whole Tolstoyan ethic is in this sentence. With all the oratorical and moral vehemence of his overstrained conscience, the great champion slung his stone so violently against the wall of our century that it was almost breached, and is still trembling from the blow. No one can measure the whole spiritual influence of the onslaught. The Russians voluntarily laying down their arms after Brest-Litovsk; Gandhi's preaching of non-resistance; Rolland's pacifist appeal during the great war; the heroic refusal of innumerable nameless men to act in defiance of conscience; the agitation for the abolition of capital punishment—these isolated and apparently disconnected movements owe a large part of their impetus to Leo Tolstoy's message. Wherever, to-day, force is repudiated, whether as instrument, as weapon, as right, or as divine ordinance, no matter under what pretext force has been advocated, whether that of nation, religion, race, or property; where-

ever the advocates of a humanist morality refuse to shed blood, to approve the crime of war, to condone a relapse into mediæval club-law, to recognize a victory in war as an expression of God's will; there everyone filled with the spirit of moral revolt is strengthened by Tolstoy's authority, Tolstoy's example, and Tolstoy's ardour. Wherever an independent conscience, instead of appealing to the outworn formulas of the Church, to the dictatorial demands of the State, or to the maxims of a traditional and mechanically operative justice, declares that in the last resort a brotherly sentiment and nothing else must decide the issues between man and man, Tolstoy can be referred to as exemplar, Tolstoy who firmly repudiated the rights of the infallible State over the individual spirit, and who appealed to his fellows to decide every question "in accordance with the dictates of the heart."

What is Tolstoy thinking of when he speaks of "evil" as something which we have to resist, though without using force? He means force itself, absolute force, whose muscles may be hidden under the clothing of political economy, national prosperity, popular aspirations, and colonial expansion; whose will-to-power and will-to-shed-blood may wear the mask of philosophical and patriotic ideals. We must not let ourselves be humbugged. In the most alluring of its sublimations, force invariably subserves, not the brotherhood of man, but the authority of a group of men, and thus perpetuates inequality. Force means possessions, means ownership and a wish to own more; for Tolstoy all inequality begins with property. The young nobleman had learned much during the hours he spent with Proudhon in Brussels. Tolstoy, in the spirit of the most revolutionary of socialists, said: "Property is the root of all evil and all suffering, and there is danger

of a conflict between those who have too much property and those who have none." If property is to maintain itself, it must defend itself, and here defence implies aggression. Force is needed to acquire property, to increase property, and to protect property. Thus property calls in the State to its aid; and the State, in turn, safeguards its existence by organized forms of force, such as the army, the judiciary, "the whole coercive system, which serves only for the protection of property"; and anyone who accepts and recognizes the State pays homage to this principle of power. According to Tolstoy, in the modern State even the intellectuals, for all their seeming independence, are devoted to the maintenance of the system whereby property is kept in the hands of the law. Nay more, the Church of Christ, which "in its true significance aimed at the abolition of the State," turns away from its supreme duty, blesses weapons of war, argues in favour of the prevailing unjust order of the world, and for these reasons is tied up in formulas, becomes a habit, a convention. The artists, too, free born, whose mission it is to defend the claims of conscience and the rights of man, shut themselves up in their ivory towers, and "put conscience to sleep." Socialism tries to play body-physician to the incurable. The revolutionists, who are the only persons that have understood the situation sufficiently to desire a complete destruction of the existing order, make the mistake of grasping at the murderous instruments of their adversaries, and help to eternalize injustice in that they fail to attack, and indeed themselves consecrate, the essential principle of "evil"—force.

In the light of these anarchist doctrines, the State and the extant earthly relationships of human beings are built on false foundations. Tolstoy rejects, as futile and im-

practicable, the democratic, philanthropic, pacifist, and revolutionary attempts to improve the forms of government. No duma, no parliament, and above all no revolution, can deliver the nation from the "evil" of force. A house built on an untrustworthy foundation cannot be propped up. We must abandon it, and build a new one. The modern State is grounded upon the idea of power, and not upon that of fraternity. Tolstoy considers it doomed to destruction; and he holds that socialist or liberal attempts to repair it merely serve to prolong the death struggle. What needs to be altered is, not the civic relation between governors and governed, but human beings themselves. Coercion by State power must be replaced by the spiritual coherence of brotherliness, for the latter alone can give social stability. Until this religious or moral fraternity has replaced the extant coercive form of State, true morality (contends Tolstoy) is possible only outside the State, outside parties, in the invisible domain of conscience. Since the State identifies itself with force, a moral man must refrain from identifying himself with the State. What is needed is a religious revolution, thanks to which every conscientious person will cut loose from communities grounded on force.

Tolstoy resolutely turns his back on the State, and declares that he is morally independent of any dictates other than those of his own conscience. He repudiates "exclusive appurtenancy to any particular people or State, and subjection to any kind of government"; he voluntarily withdraws from the Orthodox Church; and on principle he renounces an appeal to a court of justice or to any other statutory institution of contemporary society, not wishing to have a finger in the devil's pie of a State based on force. We must not let ourselves be led astray by the

evangelical gentleness of his sermons on brotherly love, by the humility of his Christian diction, by the frequency with which he appeals to the authority of the gospels. We must not thereby be led to overlook how bitterly opposed to the State is his social criticism; we must not be deceived as to the purposive energy and obduracy with which this man, the boldest heretic of his time, this revolutionary anarchist, declares war against the dominion of tsar, Church, and all the approved State authorities. His doctrine of the State is the fiercest of attacks on the State. Just as Luther broke with the papacy, so did Tolstoy, a lone man, break with the new papacy, the infallibility of property. Even Trotsky and Lenin have not, as far as theory is concerned, advanced beyond Tolstoy's "everything must be changed." The books of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "L'ami des hommes," were like mines driven under the foundations of the French monarchy—mines with which the revolutionists blew the old system into the air. In like manner Tolstoy's writings shook the tsarist, the capitalist, order of his country to the very foundations. In Germany, because Leo Tolstoy had a patriarchal beard, and because the powder of his doctrines was wrapped in honey, he is generally regarded as the apostle of gentleness, whereas in truth he was a revolutionist ultra. No doubt, just as Rousseau would have indignantly repudiated the methods of the sansculottes, so would Tolstoy have angrily decried the methods of the bolsheviks. Tolstoy hated political parties, writing: "Whichever party conquers, it must, if it is to retain power, not only utilize the existing means of force, but also discover new ones." Nevertheless, the unprejudiced historians of the future will admit that he smoothed the way for the Russian revolution. None of the forceful

activities of the revolutionists were so effective in undermining the old system and in shaking the old authority as were the public declarations issued by this solitary giant against the seemingly invincible powers of his homeland: against tsar, Church, and property. As soon as this brilliant diagnostician discovered the main flaw in the groundworks of our civilization, discovered that the State edifice is upbuilt, not upon humanity, or upon the community of men, but upon brutality, upon the dominion over men—for the ensuing thirty years he devoted his immense argumentative powers and his formidable moral strength to the launching of attack after attack against the established order in Russia. Willy-nilly, he became the Winkelried of the revolution; functioned as social dynamite; was a primal, an elemental destructive force: and thus, all unconscious, he fulfilled his Russian mission.

Russian thought, before it can upbuild, must clear the ground. No Russian artist has been spared the necessity of descending into the darkest depths of nihilism, before rising out of black despair to heights of new and ardent faith. Not for them, as for western Europeans, to be satisfied with timid ameliorations, with cautious and kindly attempts to prop up the old system. Like a woodman with his axe, felling the great tree with courageous and skilful blows, the Russian thinker, the Russian poet, the Russian man of action, attacks his difficulty. A Rostopshin, fired with the idea of victory, does not hesitate to commit Moscow, wonder of the world, to the flames. So Tolstoy, like Savonarola, does not hesitate to destroy all the cultural inheritance of mankind, all art and all science, in order to promote the establishment of a new and better theory. It may well be that Tolstoy, the religious dreamer, never realized what would be the practical out-

come of his onslaught; it is more than doubtful whether he thought of calculating how many earthly existences would be crushed by the sudden collapse of an edifice as wide as the heavens. Enough for him, under stress of conviction, to devote himself with all his energies and all his staying power to pulling and pushing at the pillars of the social structure. When such a Samson bows himself to his task, even the most giant of roofs will fall in. Discussions after the event as to whether Tolstoy would have approved or condemned the bolshevik revolution are superfluous, in view of the fact that nothing in the way of spiritual preparation did so much to favour the Russian revolution as Tolstoy's tirades against the superfluity of wealth, as the petards of his tracts, the bombs of his pamphlets. No critic of our age (not even Nietzsche, who, as a German, aimed his shafts at the cultured, and who, were it only by his metaphorical and Dionysian phrasing, was cut off from influencing the crowd) has exercised an influence comparable with Tolstoy's in transforming the mentality and revolutionizing the beliefs of the masses. Hence, little as Tolstoy would have desired it, his bust will stand for all time in the invisible pantheon of the great revolutionists, of those who have cast down the mighty from their seats, of those who have transformed the world.

Little as he would have desired it—for his Christian and individualist revolution, his anarchism, was sharply distinguished by him from the revolution, from the anarchism, of those who looked to attain their ends by force. Consider, for example, the following passage: "When we meet revolutionists, we often mistakenly believe that we and they can join hands. Like us, they cry: 'No State, no property, no inequality'; and in many other respects they voice our demands. But there is a great dif-

ference. For the Christian, there is no State; whereas they want to annihilate the State. For the Christian, there is no property; whereas they want to abolish property. For the Christian, all are equal; whereas they want to destroy inequality. The revolutionists fight against the government from without; whereas Christianity does not fight at all, but destroys the foundation of the State from within." Tolstoy's plan was that molecule after molecule, one individual after another, should be withdrawn from the State, until its organism succumbed from debility. But there is no difference in the ultimate effect, which is the destruction of all authority; and at this Tolstoy ever aimed. It is true that he also looked for the establishment of a new order, contraposing a State Church to the State, and a religious tie to the practical social tie that now exists. He wanted to found a humaner, a more brotherly religion, old as well as new, primitively Christian. He preached a Tolstoyan-Christian gospel. Let us, however, be perfectly frank when we are appraising his constructive ideas. We must draw a clear distinction between Tolstoy as an inspired critic of civilization, and Tolstoy as an unpractical, capricious, and illogical moralist; between Tolstoy the seer, and Tolstoy the thinker, the thinker who, in an access of pedagogical frenzy, was no longer content as he had been in the sixties to drive the peasant lads of Yasnaya Polyana into the school, but, with the levity of an armchair philosopher, now proposed to teach all Europe the alphabet of "right" living, to teach all Europe the one and only truth. There can be no limit to our respect for Tolstoy so long as he contents himself with criticizing the world of the senses; and so long as, with his magnificent endowments in this sensuous world, he analyses its structure. But as soon as he would fain soar into the

metaphysical, where he can no longer touch and taste and see, but where these wonderful palps of his palpate in the void, we are horrified at his spiritual incapacity. The point cannot be over-emphasized. Tolstoy as theoretician, as systematic philosopher, was as lamentable a figure as was Nietzsche (his antithesis in the world of genius) when he tried to compose. Nietzsche's musical faculty, which was gloriously productive in the realm of linguistic melody, was hopelessly inadequate in the realm of tone. In like manner, Tolstoy's intellectual faculty went woefully astray as soon as he ventured beyond the sensuous and critical sphere into the theoretical and abstract. This lack of balance in his endowments can be traced in his works.

For instance, in the pamphlet *What Is to be Done*, the first part describes the poverty-stricken quarters of Moscow concretely, with a mastery that takes the reader's breath away. In the second part, Tolstoy the utopist moves on from diagnosis to therapeutics, tells the reader how, in his opinion, things can be bettered. At once the ideas are clouded, the outlines grow hazy. This confusion increases from problem to problem, the more boldly he moves onward. Nor can it be denied that he moved onward boldly enough. Though he has had no philosophical training, in his tracts and pamphlets, with terrifying irreverence, he touches on all the eternally insoluble problems which range into the infinite, and "solves" them as easily as if he were melting glue in a pot. For just as, during the crisis, the impetuous man wanted to indue a "faith" as easily as if he were putting on a sheepskin coat, expected to become Christian and humble in a night, so in these writings which are to educate the world he expects to grow a forest in less time than it takes to plant a sapling. The man who in 1878 had declared that our

whole earthly life was unmeaning, is ready three years later to offer us his universal theology as the solution of all the enigmas of the world. It need hardly be said that one who thinks at such dizzy speed, and builds with such desperate haste, must necessarily be impatient of contradiction. That is why Tolstoy stops his ears when he sets to work, why he overrules every objection, and desires no approval but his own. How wavering must be the faith of him whose only concern is "to bear testimony"; how illogical, how insecurely based must be the thought of him who, as soon as arguments fail, quotes a text from the Bible as irrefutable support! It cannot be too emphatically asserted that Tolstoy's didactic writings are but zealotry, and are among the most unpleasant specimens of this unpleasant kind of literature; they are confused, arbitrary, and (this amazes us in the case of Tolstoy the devotee of truth) positively dishonest.

Indeed this most veracious of artists, this most exemplary of moralists, this great and almost saintly man, does not run straight as a theoretician. Wanting to put the boundless world of thought into his philosophical sack, he begins with a crude conjuring trick, simplifying all the problems to an extreme, so that they can be handled as easily as playing cards. He arranges them in his pack: "man," "good," "evil," "sin," "sensuality," "brotherliness," "faith," and so on. Shuffling the cards with the ostensible openness of a card-sharper, he turns up "love" as trump, and wins the game. In one short hour, the riddle of the universe, infinite and insoluble, whose answer has been vainly sought for a thousand generations, is solved by him as he sits at his desk; and the old man smiles like a happy child, delighted and astonished to see "how simple it is after all." He finds it inexplicable that for

thousands of years the philosophers, the men of genius, who lie in thousands of coffins, in thousands of countries, should have wrestled with this enigma so strenuously, and should never have noticed that "truth," the whole truth, has long since been set forth clear as daylight in the gospels—provided always that you interpret them as he, Leo Nikolaevich, interprets them in the year of our Lord 1878, "understanding them rightly for the first time in eighteen hundred years," and at long last stripping from the divine message the plaster with which it has been covered (yes, such are his very words!). Now our troubles are ended. Men will surely recognize, at length, how simple life is. They need merely scrap the causes of their troubles. Let them do away with the State, religion, art, civilization, property, marriage. Then they will have freed themselves for ever from "evil" and "sin." When each man ploughs his own plot of land, bakes his own bread, and cobbles his own boots, there will be no more State and no more religions, but only the Kingdom of God upon earth. For "God is love, and love is the aim of life." Away, then, with books; trouble no more to think; "love" suffices; everything can be achieved to-morrow, "if only men have the will."

One who thus reproduces the actual tenor of the Tolstoyan theological system is likely to be charged with exaggeration. Unfortunately, it is Tolstoy himself who, in his proselytizing zeal, exaggerates so heinously; it is Tolstoy himself, who, wishing to make up for the poverty of his arguments, has recourse to such preposterous metaphors. How admirable, how clear, how irrefutable, is his fundamental notion, his gospel of non-resistance. This is what he demands from us all; this, and spiritual humility.

He warns us to avert the otherwise inevitable conflict which will issue from the increasing inequality between the different social strata; to avert the revolution from beneath by voluntarily beginning it from above, and to obviate the use of force by a primitive Christian renunciation of force. The rich man is to rid himself of his wealth; the intellectual is to free himself from arrogance; the artists are to quit their ivory towers and to mingle with the people. We are to tame our passions, our "animal" personality; and, instead of encouraging greed, we are to cultivate the capacity for giving. Beyond question, these are splendid precepts, whose reiteration is essential to the progress of mankind. But Tolstoy, in his impatience, is not content as most religious teachers have been content to demand such things as the supreme acquirements of choice individuals; he insists that all shall display these gentle qualities, without exception, instantly. In his desire to convert the world to his way of thinking, he lapses into hyperbole, insisting that we shall all of us, in a trice, renounce the objects towards which we are driven by imperious urges. The sexagenarian adjures young men to practise a sexual continence which was not characteristic of himself in youth; for artists and thinkers he prescribes, not merely indifference towards, but positive contempt for, art and thought, to which he has himself been hitherto devoted. In his eagerness to convince everyone that extant civilization has no foundations worthy of respect, he sets out to demolish with mighty strokes all the props of our intellectual world. In his eagerness to make unqualified asceticism more attractive, he calumniates our latter-day culture, our artists, our imaginative writers, our technicians, and our men of science, passing beyond the realm of exaggeration into that

of crude untruth. Nor does he hesitate to calumniate himself, since that helps him to clear the ground for attacks on others.

Are we really to sùppose that Leo Tolstoy, one of whose most faithful companions and advisers was a private physician, in actual fact regarded medical science and its practitioners as "unnecessary things," life as a "sin," and cleanliness as "superfluous luxury"? Is it true that Tolstoy, whose writings fill a bookshelf, lived the life of a "useless parasite," was no better than a "plant-louse"? Read his words: "I eat, chatter, listen, eat again, write and read, this meaning that I speak and listen once more, then I eat again, amuse myself, eat and talk once more, then I eat again, and go to bed," and ask yourself whether that was actually the way in which *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* were created. Is it true that this man, to whose eyes the tears rise when he listens to one of Chopin's sonatas, is like a Puritan, and regards music as nothing more than the devil's bagpipes? Did he honestly believe that Beethoven was a "seducer to sensuality," that Shakespeare's plays were "meaningless twaddle," that Nietzsche's writings were "coarse, foolishly emphatic babble," that Pushkin's works were "only fit to use as cigarette paper for the people"? This man who served art so magnificently—can he in actual fact have looked upon art as nothing more than "the luxury of idlers"; and did he believe his own words when he said that the opinions of Grisha the tailor and Pyotr the shoemaker were of more moment to him than those of Turgenieff or Dostoeffsky? He who had been "an indefatigable whoremonger" in youth and who had subsequently procreated thirteen children in lawful wedlock—did he honestly believe that young men, moved by his appeals, would all

become skoptsy, would all emasculate themselves? We see that Tolstoy is frenzied in his exaggerations, and we infer that he is driven to exaggerate by an uneasy conscience, in the hope that by exaggeration he will be able to hide the paucity of his arguments.

Sometimes, indeed, he seems to have had an inkling that this nonsense is nullified by its own excess, as when he writes: "I have very little hope that my propositions will be accepted, or even seriously discussed." How painfully true! When he was alive, it was impossible to argue with this champion of non-resistance. "Nobody can convince Leo Tolstoy," sighs his wife. "He is so opinionated that he can never admit having made a mistake," reports another woman, one of his most intimate friends. Now, when he is dead, it would be absurd to take up the cudgels against him on behalf of Beethoven or Shakespeare! Those who love Tolstoy follow the wisest course by ignoring him when he makes too obvious a display of illogicality. No one whose opinion is worth a rap has ever been led by Tolstoy's theological outbursts to accept the view that it behoves us to abandon a struggle which has been going on for thousands of years, the struggle to guide life by reason; that it behoves us to scrap all the most notable acquisitions of the human spirit. This Europe of ours, in which such a master of thought as Nietzsche was so recently born, a region to whose cultivation of the powers of the mind we owe it that this difficult world has become habitable—this Europe of ours has certainly no inclination, in obedience to the ipse dixit of a fantastical moralist, to return to a peasant, a Mongolian, simplicity; to return to a life in skin tents; to adjure its intellectual past as "sinful" error. Europe has been and will remain respectful enough to draw a distinction between Tolstoy

the champion of the individual conscience, and the Tolstoy who made desperate efforts to develop a nervous crisis into a philosophy, to transform a climacteric anxiety into a system of economics. We shall always distinguish between the fine moral impulses which were the outcome of what was best in the riper years of this artist's life; and the attempt to exorcise civilization as an evil demon, which is the characteristic fruit of the theories of his old age. Tolstoy's earnestness and realism have quickened the conscience of our generation; but the theories we are now considering are nothing more than an attack upon the joy of life, are the expression of an ascetic desire to lapse from civilization into an impossible primitive Christianity, as conceived by the imagination of a man who was no longer a Christian and had therefore transcended Christianity.

Who believes that "abstinence is the very essence of life," that we should burden ourselves with duties and regulate our conduct by Bible texts in a way that would drain all the blood from our veins? We live for this world, not for another, and we do not put our trust in an interpreter who knows naught of the procreative and invigorating power of joy. We refuse to surrender the acquirements of our reasoning faculties and our technique; to abandon the heritage of western civilization; to make a bonfire of our books, our pictures, our cities, and our science. We will not part with a grain of palpable and visible reality at the bidding of any philosopher, and least of all at the bidding of one who preaches a reactionary and depressing doctrine, who counsels us to withdraw from the town into the steppe, to exchange a life of intellectual activity for one of spiritual dullness. No promise of heavenly bliss will induce us to barter away the bewildering plenitude of our earthly existence for a

narrow simplicity. We would rather be "sinful" than primitive, would rather enjoy our passions than become stupid and biblically devout. That is why Europe has put away Tolstoy's sociological theories in its literary deed-boxes, with due respect for the ethical will that inspires them, but determined to pay no further heed to them. For we are convinced that the retrograde and the reactionary can never be creative, even though they present themselves in the most religious of garbs, and even though they are advocated by a man of genius; and we are sure that the product of mental confusion can never tend to bring clarity of vision to the world. Finally, we will not listen to this gospel because Tolstoy, though he has driven the ploughshare of his criticism more deeply than any other into the soil of our time, has not enriched that soil with a single grain of seed destined to bear fruit in our European future—being herein typically Russian, the embodiment of the spirit of his race and his generation.

Beyond question, the meaning and the mission of the spirit of Russia during the last hundred years have found expression in the holy unrest and the relentless passion with which the depths of our moral nature have been explored, with which the roots of all social problems have been exposed; and perforce we bow in veneration before the collective genius of Russian artists. If to-day our feelings run in deeper channels than of yore, if our knowledge has become more resolute, if our outlooks on the problems of time and eternity are more steadfast and more tragical and more unflinching than of old, we have to thank Russia and Russian literature for this boon, as also for the creative unrest which leads us towards a new truth transcending the ancient verities. Russian thought

is a ferment of the spirit, which endows that spirit with enhanced energies; but it does not promote lucidity like the thought of Spinoza, Montaigne, and some of the Germans. The Russians have given magnificent help towards the spiritual expansion of the world, and no artists of modern times have ploughed and harrowed the soul more effectively than Tolstoy and Dostoeffsky. But neither of them has helped us in upbuilding a new order; and when they seek to convince us that the chaos which exists in the depths of their own minds must be accepted as the meaning of the world, we cannot but reject their teaching. Both Tolstoy and Dostoeffsky, seized with terror at the contemplation of the abysses of their own nihilism, and overwhelmed with a primal anxiety, seek refuge in religious reaction. That they may escape falling into the gulf their own imaginations have created, they cling to the Christian cross, and spread a cloud athwart the Russian world at the very time when Nietzsche's clarifying lightnings are rending to tatters the old anxieties about heaven, and when Nietzsche has bestowed upon Europeans the gift of faith in their own power and freedom.

How strange a spectacle! Tolstoy and Dostoeffsky, the greatest Russians of their day, are suddenly smitten with apocalyptic terrors, lay aside their work, and uplift a Russian cross, both of them appealing to Christ (though to different Christs) as saviour of a dying world. Like frenzied mediæval monks, they stand in their pulpits, hostile each to the other in spirit as in their lives. Dostoeffsky is an arch-reactionary, a defender of the autocracy, a preacher of war and terror, an admirer of excess of power, devotee of the tsar who had cast him into prison, worshipper of an imperialistic and world-conquering re-

deemer. Tolstoy no less fanatically scorns what Dostoeffsky admires, is mystically anarchistic just as Dostoeffsky is mystically servile, stigmatizing the tsar as an assassin, Church and State as robbers, and fulminating against war. He, likewise, has the name of Christ on his lips and holds the New Testament in his hand. Both of them are reactionaries who, urged onward by fears that well up from within, would fain push the world back into humility and mental hebetude. Surely both of them must have been prophetically inspired; they must have had premonitions of the destruction of the world; they must have foreseen than an earthquake was impending in Russia. Is not this the mission of the poiete, that he shall see in advance the lightnings, shall hear in advance the crash of thunder; that he shall feel in advance the pangs which will accompany the birth of a new time? With their calls to repentance, these wrathful prophets, who had visions of the coming destruction and did nothing to avert the omen, seem like gigantic figures come down to us out of the Old Testament, unparalleled in the modern world.

They have no power to do more than sense what is coming; they can do nothing to change the course of events. Dostoeffsky execrates the revolution, but hardly is he in his tomb before the bomb which kills the tsar is thrown. Tolstoy rails against war and demands love on earth, but spring has not greened four times over his grave before the most horrible of fratricidal struggles desecrates the world. The characters in his books, offspring of an art which in later years he despised, outlive the ravages of time; but his doctrines have been overthrown by the first gusts. He did not live to see the collapse of his kingdom of God, the hopeless failure of his gospel of love; but he must have looked forward to what would

happen. During the last year of his life, when he was seated among his friends, a letter was brought to him. Opening it, he read as follows:

"No, Leo Nikolaevich, I cannot agree with you that human relations may be bettered by love alone. None but carefully brought up and well-fed persons can say that. What message have you for those who have been hungry from earliest childhood, and who throughout life have groaned under the yoke of tyrants? They will fight; they will try to free themselves from slavery. On the eve of your death, Leo Nikolaevich, I tell you that the world will once again be drenched with blood; more than once the masters, without distinction of sex, they and their children, will be slaughtered and torn to pieces, that the earth may no longer have to look for evil at their hands. I am sorry that you will not live to see this day, on which the evidence of your own eyes would convince you that you have been wrong. I wish you a peaceful death."

No one knows who wrote this ominous letter. Was it penned by Trotsky or by Lenin, or by one of the nameless revolutionists mouldering in Schlüsselburg? We shall never know. Likely enough, by the time he received it, Tolstoy was already aware that his teaching was in hopeless conflict with the realities of life, that passion has more influence on men's actions than brotherly love. We are told that his face became overshadowed as he read the letter, and that he looked thoughtful as he took it away with him into his room, his spirit troubled with forebodings.

STRUGGLE FOR REALIZATION

It is easier to write ten volumes of philosophy than to put one principle into practice.

DIARY, 1847

In his later years, Tolstoy spent much of his time over the Bible. With disquietude he must have pondered the text: "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind," for the prophecy was certainly fulfilled in his own life. A man who casts his spiritual unrest into the world will assuredly rue it, above all if he be a great man. Intensified a thousandfold, the trouble will return into his own breast. To-day, when the topic has grown cold, it is hard to realize what extravagant expectations were aroused by Tolstoy's message, in the Russian world first of all, and afterwards across the frontiers. This message produced a spiritual uproar, stirred the folk conscience to its depths. Vainly did the Russian autocracy, alarmed by the widespread response, hasten to suppress Tolstoy's polemic writings. They passed from hand to hand in typewritten copies, and editions printed abroad were smuggled into Russia. The more virulently the author attacked the foundations of the existing order, and the more ardently he advocated the establishment of a new and better order, the louder was the echo in the hearts of his fellows. Men are ever ready to listen to a gospel of redemption. To-day, railways and telegraphs and wireless notwithstanding, despite our microscopes and other

technical marvels, the world of the moral life is athrill with messianic expectations, just as it was in the days of Jesus, Mohammed, and Buddha. Now, as of old, man is eager for miracles; now, as of old, the soul of the masses thirsts for a teacher and a leader. Always, therefore, one who presents himself as a redeemer can look for the customary reaction on the part of the redemptionist nerves of his fellow mortals; and the prophet who is bold enough to say "I know the truth" can count upon a number of self-sacrificing disciples.

Thus it was that towards the close of the nineteenth century, when Tolstoy announced his apostolic mission, millions upon millions of Russians were ready to heed his message. *My Confession,* which for us has long ceased to be anything more than a document of psychological interest, fired youthful believers like a new Book of Revelation. "At length," they said, rejoicing, "a mighty man and a free spirit, known far and wide as the greatest Russian writer of the day, has voiced the demand which has hitherto been voiced by the disinherited, or whispered in secret by those who are still little better than serfs. He has declared that the extant order of the world is unjust, immoral, and therefore untenable; and he insists that a new and better form must be discovered. An unexpected impetus has been conveyed to all malcontents. Moreover, it has not come from one of those whose profession is to make phrases about progress, but from a man of independent and incorruptible personality, whose authority and sincerity no one will dream of challenging. This man, we are given to understand, wishes to set an example by the conduct of his own life, by every action he performs. A count, he refuses to avail himself of the privileges of nobility; a wealthy man, he would fain discard his pro-

prietary rights; born and brought up among the great, he prefers to participate in the working community of the people, to the end that religious brotherhood shall replace the tyranny of the State, and that the divine kingdom of love shall be substituted for the tsardom of force." Tidings of this new redeemer of the dispossessed soon filter down to the uncultured, to the peasants, to the illiterate; the first disciples come together; the Tolstoyans begin to follow their teacher's injunctions word by word and letter by letter; and behind this small group of the faithful there waits and watches the huge mass of the oppressed, wondering whether for them, so often disappointed, hope has at length dawned. Millions of hearts are glowing, millions of eyes are centred on Tolstoy the revealer, eagerly watching his every action. "He has learned, and he will teach us."

Yet, strangely enough, Tolstoy does not at first seem to realize how great is his responsibility, now that, so unexpectedly, a vast multitude of adherents is scrutinizing his private life. Of course he is perspicacious enough to be aware that one who is to reveal a new doctrine of life must not be content with the writing of precepts, but must demonstrate the reality of his teaching by his own example. Yet in the early days of his mission he makes the mistake of thinking that he does enough when he symbolically indicates by his behaviour his conviction that his social and moral demands are practicable, by giving, now and again, a sign of willingness to act on his own principles. Thus he dresses like a peasant, in order to obliterate the outward distinction between lord and underling; he works in the fields with scythe and plough, and has his portrait painted in this guise by Repin, that everyone may have ocular demonstration of what he thinks. "I do

not regard manual labour in the fields, the honest toil by which bread is made, as shameful; and no one ought to be ashamed of it, seeing that I, Leo Tolstoy, who (as you all know) need not do such work, I, whose powers in the intellectual world might be supposed to excuse him from activities in the physical, am glad to undertake these latter." To purge his soul of the "sin" of ownership, he assigns his property (which at that date already amounted to more than half a million roubles) to his wife and family, and refuses to receive any more money or money's worth for his writings. To the poor and lowly, to anyone who asks, he gives alms and time; and he tenders brotherly help wherever injustice is done.

Ere long he has to recognize that more than this is demanded of him. The great mass of the faithful, the "people," with which he seeks to become identified, is not content with these intellectualized symbols of humility, but asks that he should share, without qualification and without pause, the miseries and misfortunes of the folk. The crown of martyrdom—that is what the prophet must wear if he is to inspire perfect faith, to arouse unshakable conviction. The founder of a religion must not limit himself to an allusive attitude, to one which simply promises; he must demonstrate his own faith by absolute self-surrender. All that Tolstoy has hitherto done to strengthen his followers' belief in the practicability of his doctrines has been to make humble gestures, to perform actions symbolical of humility, comparable to those demanded of the Pope and of the strictly orthodox among the emperors, who once a year, on Maundy Thursday, wash the feet of twelve old men. This ceremony is designed to show that even the most exalted of mortals cannot be debased by the meanest of occupations. Just as

little as the Pope or the Emperor of Austria or the King of Spain really forfeited power, really became a servant, thanks to the performance of this annual ceremony, just so little did the distinguished author and great nobleman become a shoemaker because he worked for an hour with awl and waxed thread, become a peasant because he did a morning's labour in the fields from time to time, become a mendicant because he assigned his property to his housemates. In these ways, he may have demonstrated the practicability of his doctrines, but he was not effectively practising them. It was effective practice that the folk wanted of him. Under stress of a deep-rooted instinct, they demanded an unqualified sacrifice, and would not accept the will—the symbol—for the deed. The disciples took a more literal view of the teaching than did the teacher. They were disappointed, disillusioned, when, making pilgrimage to the abiding place of this advocate of voluntary poverty, they noted that, at Yasnaya Polyana, as in other manors, the peasants were still poverty stricken, whereas Leo Tolstoy was still a nobleman who welcomed his guests in the grand style, thereby writing himself down as a member of that "class of persons who, by all kinds of artifices, rob the people of the necessaries of life." The loudly proclaimed assignment of property did not manifest itself as a genuine renunciation, as an acceptance of the poor man's lot. The pilgrims found the author living as comfortably as ever, and the hours at the plough-tail or at the cobbler's last did not suffice to stifle their doubts. "What sort of man is this, who preaches one thing and does another?" mutters an old peasant angrily. Revolutionary minded students and declared communists are even harsher in their judgment of such wobbling twixt precept and practice. By degrees, even

the most ardent of his followers are disconcerted by his half-measures. Admonitory letters, fierce invectives, enjoin him, either to repudiate the doctrines he does not practise, or else to practise them to the full.

Alarmed by these appeals, Tolstoy comes in the end to recognize how extensive are the demands he is making; and to perceive that, if his mission is to be a live one, words must yield place to deeds, and advice to others must be backed up by a thoroughgoing transformation of his own existence. "One who wishes to be heard by men must confirm truth by suffering, and, better still, by death." Thus Tolstoy is forced to shoulder obligations which he did not foresee when he began his mission. Perplexed, alarmed, uncertain of his own strength, harried with anxiety, he takes up his cross, determined that henceforward his actions shall be the embodiment of his convictions; resolved that, in a mocking and chattering world, he will be a saintly exponent of his religious faith.

"Saintly"; the word has been uttered, despite the risk of mockery. There can be no doubt that in this sober age of ours, the figure of the saint looks absurd, not to say impossible—an anachronistic survival from the middle ages. In this case the feeling of anachronism relates only to the emblems of sainthood, and to its cult. These are unquestionably out of date. Nevertheless, the saintly type, having once appeared on earth, recurs ever and again in the eternal recurrence of the similar which we term history. In every epoch, certain persons are impelled to attempt a saintly existence, for the religious sentiment of mankind perpetually feels the need for this highest form of spiritual life, and perpetually recreates it, though with attributes which necessarily differ with the changing times. Our modern conception of the sanctification of existence

by spiritual ardour has little in common with the woodcuts that illustrate the Golden Legend or with the petrified rigidity of the anchorites in the desert. We have long since given up connecting the idea of sainthood with the utterances of oecumenical councils and the decisions of papal conclaves. When we talk of a life as saintly, we mean that it is heroical in the sense of entire devotion to a religiously conceived ideal. The intellectual ecstasy, the ascetic loneliness, of the iconoclast of Sils-Maria, and the amazing abstinence of the lens-polisher of Amsterdam, seems to us as impressive as the physical ecstasy of a flagellant. Even to-day, when miracles are out of fashion, when we write with a machine and read by electric light, in the modern cities whose wide streets divide them into perfectly rectangular blocks, there is still place for saints to bear witness to the power of conscience. Where we differ from our forefathers is that we no longer find it necessary to look upon these rare and remarkable beings as infallible, as uplifted out of all danger of lapsing into earthly peccadilloes. On the contrary, we love them in their crises and their struggles; and we sympathize with them most keenly, not despite their weaknesses, but because of these. Our generation does not look for saints who are to be regarded as messengers from a superhuman realm, but for saints whom it can honour as the most human among men.

That is why, in Tolstoy's strenuous endeavour to make his life a model one, we are especially touched by his vacillations, and are more moved by his failures than we should have been by an incredible sanctity. Even when we are unable to share his views, the suffering he endured in the attempt to realize them convinces us of the loftiness of his aims. Inasmuch as Tolstoy attempts to

emerge from the conventional forms of life, and to act in accordance with those principles which are timeless and eternal, his life assumes the aspect of a tragedy greater than any we have witnessed since Nietzsche's. Such a forcible cutting adrift from all the relations of family life, from the habits of the nobleman, the ties of wealth, the customs of his rank and his epoch, could not be effected without the painful laceration of a closely meshed nervous network, without inflicting grievous suffering upon himself and those near and dear to him. Tolstoy did not dread the pain. A true Russian, and therefore an extremist, he was not merely willing to be put to the test, but positively thirsted to give visible proof that his conviction was genuine. He had long been weary of the comforts of life; family happiness, fame, the outward tokens of veneration, had begun to disgust him; unconsciously, the creative elements in him were longing for a tenser and more diversified existence, for a more intimate communion with the primal energies of mankind, for poverty and suffering, whose formative influences he did not come to recognize until after the crisis. He wanted to live as the lowliest must live; without home or money or family; dirty, lousy, despised; persecuted by the State and rejected by the Church. To give plain demonstration that his humility was genuine, he wanted to experience in his own person the life which in his books he had described as best fitted to promote spiritual development; the life of one who is homeless, propertyless, driven onward by fate like a leaf by the autumn winds. In this matter, history, the supreme artist, has constructed another of her brilliantly ironical antitheses. Tolstoy spontaneously and urgently desired the fate which had been imposed from without upon his counterpart Dostoeffsky. For Dostoeff-

sky had suffered at the cruel hands of fate all that Tolstoy, eager for martyrdom, now sought on principle. To Dostoeffsky poverty clung like the shirt of Nessus, which seared his flesh, and denied him every possibility of joy. He wandered, homeless, from country to country, tortured by illness. The tsar's soldiers bound him to the post of execution, and then, when he was reprieved from death, hustled him away to a Siberian prison. All these sufferings which Tolstoy needed (so he thought) for the demonstration of his doctrine, for the realization of his social ideal, were squandered on Dostoeffsky; whereas Tolstoy, who yearned for martyrdom, was not vouchsafed this boon.

Tolstoy is never able to achieve a demonstration of his will-to-passion. Fate bars his road to martyrdom. He wants to be poor, to give all his possessions to his fellowmen, to refrain from making any more money out of his writings; but his family will not allow him to be poor, and the great property goes on growing in the hands of his housemates. He would like to lead a solitary life; but his fame increases, so that he is besieged by interviewers and other visitors. He would fain be despised; but the more he rails at himself, the more contemptuously he talks of his own work, and the more persistently he questions his own uprightness, the more do others regard him with veneration. He would be glad to lead the life of a peasant, to dwell in a smoke-grimed hut, unknown and untroubled, or to wander as pilgrim and mendicant; but his family takes the utmost care of him, and, to his great annoyance, surrounds him with the modern conveniences which he scorns. He yearns to be prosecuted, to be imprisoned and scourged, saying, "It is painful to me that I have to live in freedom"; but the authorities are long-

suffering, refuse to treat him harshly, and are content to deal with his followers, some of whom are knouted and sent to Siberia. At length, therefore, as a last resort, he showers abuse on the tsar, hoping that after this public demonstration he will be allowed, publicly, to expiate his offence and thus prove the reality of his convictions; but Nicholas II, when one of his ministers lodges a complaint, says, "Take no steps against Leo Tolstoy, for I do not intend to make a martyr of him." A shrewd decision, for martyrdom was what Tolstoy most ardently desired during the last years of his life, and this was the one thing fate would not grant him. Enraged, like a madman in a padded room, Tolstoy, prisoned by the intangible walls of his own fame, laid about him with blows that were void of effect, reviling himself, reviling State, Church, and all other constituted authorities. These authorities listened to him politely, hat in hand, treating him indulgently as a harmless lunatic. The demonstration for which he had hoped, the public martyrdom which he craved, were for ever denied him.

But why—the question came impatiently from his admirers, and mockingly from his adversaries—why did he not resolutely put an end to this distressing, this absurd contradiction? Why did he not make a clean sweep of photographers and reporters? Why did he allow the members of his family to go on receiving money for the sale of his books? Why did he allow those with whom he lived, those who would not accept his teaching, those who regarded wealth and comfort as the chief goods of life, to do as they pleased in these matters? Why did he not follow the call of his own conscience? Tolstoy was never able to answer these terrible questions, and never tried to excuse himself for his failure. None of the chatterers who

were so ready to draw attention to the glaring contrast between precept and practice could judge him more harshly than he judged himself. In 1908, he wrote in his diary: "If I were to hear of a stranger that he lived in luxury, took all he could from the peasants, looked on inertly when they were arrested, while calling himself a Christian and preaching Christianity to others, while doling out halfpence as alms, while taking shelter behind his wife from the consequences of all his mean actions—I should not hesitate to call him a scoundrel! That is what must be said of me, since I profess to renounce the vanities of the world and to live only for the things of the spirit." Leo Tolstoy did not need anyone else to inform him that there was a conflict between will and action. Questioning himself in his diary, he wrote: "Do you yourself live in accordance with the principles you teach?" And he answered despairingly: "No, I am utterly ashamed, am guilty, and contemptible." He had no doubt whatever that there could be but one logical outcome to his profession of faith; that he ought to leave his home, to renounce his title of nobility, to abandon his art, and "to wander as a pilgrim upon the roads of Russia." But he could never constrain himself to take the necessary step.

So be it! For me, the mystery of this weakness, this incapacity for a ruthless carrying out of his own principles, is the crowning beauty of Tolstoy's character. There is something inhuman about perfection. The saint, even if he be an apostle of gentleness, must be capable of hardness. He must be able to impose upon his disciples the inhuman task of leaving father and mother, of abandoning wife and children, in order to attain sanctity. A consistent, a perfectly rounded existence, is possible only to an individual cut adrift from his fellows, to one who

lives in a vacuum; it is not possible to one who has ties and associations. That is why, in all ages, the path of the saint has led into the desert, as the only place where a saint can be at home. Tolstoy, likewise, in order to realize the ultimate consequences of his doctrine, would have had, not only to renounce Church and State, but also to quit the warm and intimate environment of the family. For thirty years he lacked the strength needed for this act of violence. Twice he fled, and twice he returned. The thought that his wife, in her despair, might kill herself, paralysed his will, blunted the edge of its brutality. He could not make up his mind (you may censure him as illogical, but you cannot fail to admire him for his humanity) to sacrifice another to his own abstract idea. Rather than break with his children, rather than drive his wife to suicide, he reluctantly endured an association in which there was no spiritual community. Too humane to hurt those with whom he lived, in decisive matters (like that of his will, and that of the sale of his books) he bowed to the wishes of his family, and preferred to accept suffering for himself than cause suffering to others. Hard as the struggle was, he would rather be a frail human being than an obdurate saint.

He accepts all the blame for his lukewarmness and lack of consistency. He knows that every guttersnipe can gibe at him, that every honest man can question his uprightness, that every one of his disciples can condemn him; but here Tolstoy displays magnificent endurance throughout these dark years, and bows to the accusation of duplicity without attempting to excuse himself. "In the eyes of men my position may well seem a false one; perhaps this is necessary," he writes in 1898. He is beginning to understand the special character of his probation; to un-

derstand that an inglorious martyrdom such as his, that having to suffer unjust accusations without being able to put up a defence or offer an excuse, is a harder lot than that of one who is martyred publicly and dramatically. "I often wished to suffer, would gladly have endured persecution, but that was only an expression of slothfulness, of the wish that others should do the work for me, they tormenting me, while all I had to do was to suffer." The most impatient of men, one who would gladly have dived over head and ears into torture, who would have been willing to go to the stake for his convictions, has come to recognize that for him has been reserved the far more dreadful fate of being roasted at a slow fire, of suffering at one and the same time from the contempt of the uninitiated and from the reproaches of his own conscience. Hour after hour he perceives his own inconsistency, must blame himself for his sins of omission, must censure himself for his own futility; yet at the same time he feels that his discontent is essential, for it humbles his pride and reveals to him his own weakness. Again and again it is forced upon him that he is incompetent to perform his supreme task, that of setting a good example; and that he is unable to fulfil his most intimate aspiration, that of leading a saintly life in which he will be true to himself. With infinite shame he admits that he cannot realize in his own practice the things he is demanding of all mankind. This secret cancer of the mind makes his closing years far more tragical than they would have been had he been able to play the part of consistent hero. It is for the very reason that he did not fulfil, could not fulfil, his own ethical demands, that the figure of this great moralist is so impressive.

Tolstoy, with his genius for self-criticism, was harsher

than all objective accusers in his suspicion as to the purity of his own motives. What his adversaries often whispered, their accusation that in adopting the role of redeemer and in making public proclamation of humility he had been influenced by a desire to appear in the limelight, and not by straightforward motives at all—this terrible charge is inexorably pressed home by Tolstoy against himself. Those who want to know what torments of conscience he suffered in the attempt to attain clarity as to his own motives should read the posthumous story *Father Sergius*. St. Teresa, alarmed by her visions, anxiously asked her confessor whether these manifestations really came from God, and might not have been sent by the devil to test her pride. So Tolstoy, in this story, asks himself whether his sayings and doings before men can really be of divine origin, can really spring from a moral source, or whether they may not derive from the devil of vanity, be the outcome of vaingloriousness, of a delight in popular adulation. Thinly veiled in *Father Sergius* is an account of his own position at Yasnaya Polyana. To the saint in the story, the wonder-working monk, flock penitents and admirers, just as to Tolstoy flock the believers, the curious, and those hunting for a new sensation. Like Tolstoy, his double in the story, at the very time when his adherents are thronging round him, is asking himself whether he, whom they honour as a saint, is indeed saintly in his heart. He inquires: "To what extent are the things which I do, done for love of God, and to what extent are they done only for the approbation of man?" Tolstoy answers his own question through Father Sergius' mouth. He feels in the depths of his soul that the devil has transformed his activities for the love of God into other activities, designed to secure the approbation of man. He is aware

that, whereas in former days he would have been glad if visitors had not come to disturb his solitude, he would now find solitude an affliction. His visitors are a nuisance; they weary him: but, in his innermost heart, he enjoys their coming, delights in their adulation. He has less and less time for reflection and prayer. He sometimes feels that he is like a place out of which a spring had burst forth, "a gently flowing spring of living water, which streamed out of me and through me. Now the water can no longer collect in a pool, for so many thirsty folk press round the spring, jostling one another, and trampling the ground, that there is nothing left but a patch of mire." There is no more love in him, no humility, no purity.

Thus does Tolstoy repudiate attempts to canonize him, esteeming himself as nothing more than a seeker, as nothing more than one who is laboriously and with faltering steps striving towards God. Through the mouth of his double, he asks himself: "Had you not an honest desire to serve God?" The answer threatens to slam all the doors leading to saintliness: "Yes, there was such a desire, but it has been befouled and overgrown by vainglorious-ness. There is no God for such as I, no God for one who has lived to win man's approbation." Still, a ray of hope shines through the darkness: "None the less, I will seek him."

"I will seek him." Here we have the expression of Tolstoy's truest will. His destiny, he thinks, is not to find God, but only to seek God. He will not be one of those who can solve riddles for mankind, but only one of those who help their fellows to ask new questions, and to ask them more sincerely and ruthlessly than before. He has not become a saint, a redeemer; has not even been able to reshape his own life unambiguously. He has remained

a man among men, rising to greatness at one instant, to lapse into pettiness the next; a man full of weaknesses and inadequacies and equivocations, but quick to recognize his errors, and filled with eagerness to attain perfection. Not a saint, but a man inspired by a saintly will; not a believer, but endowed with a titanic longing for faith; not an image of the divine, tranquil in its perfection, but a symbol of the human, which can never rest content with its acquirements, but must, day by day and hour by hour, continue the struggle.

A DAY IN TOLSTOY'S LIFE

Family life is depressing to me because I am unable to share the sentiments of my associates. The things which please them—distinction in school examinations, worldly success, shopping and marketing—these things seem to me misfortunes, bad for them all, though I cannot tell them so. Or, indeed, I can and do tell them, but nobody understands what I say.

DIARY

From the descriptions of his friends and from his own words, I compile the following account of one day among thousands similarly spent by Leo Tolstoy.

It is early morning. The old man awakens slowly, looks around. The light of dawn already shows through the window. Thought springs from its dark recess. His first feeling, one of happy astonishment, is: "I am still alive!" Last night, as was customary with him, he had lain down to sleep humbly prepared to accept his fate if there was to be no awakening. By the flickering light of the lamp, when writing in his diary next day's date, he had added three letters, the initials of the Russian words meaning "if I live." Now, wonderful to relate, the gift of existence has again been bestowed on him. He lives, breathes, is in good health. He draws deep breaths of the air which comes to him as a greeting from God, and with his grey eyes he eagerly scans the growing light. How wonderful to be alive and well! Thankfully the old

man gets out of bed, and strips. His well preserved body glows in vigorous reaction to the touch of ice-cold water. He exercises like a young gymnast. Then, having dressed, he opens the window and sweeps out the room, tosses billets of wood upon the crackling fire. He is his own servant.

Now he goes to the breakfast room, to find Sofia Andreevna, his daughters, his secretary, and a few friends, already in their places, while the samovar is singing on the table. The secretary brings him a miscellaneous assortment of letters, newspapers, and books, adorned with postage stamps from every quarter of the world. Tolstoy looks gloomily at the pile. "Incense and annoyance," he thinks. "Distraction, anyhow! I wish to be more alone with myself and with God, wish that I did not have to play the part of navel to the universe, that I could keep far away from me all these things that disturb and confuse, that tend to make me vain, arrogant, untruthful, a seeker after fame. The best thing would be to throw the whole lot into the fire, and thus avoid waste of time and escape being puffed up with pride."

Nevertheless, curiosity has its way with him. Swiftly he looks through the medley of requests, complaints, business proposals, messages announcing visits, idle chatter. A brahmin writes from India to say that Tolstoy has misunderstood one of the sacred doctrines; a prisoner in a penitentiary tells the story of his life and asks advice; young men put their difficulties before him; beggars ask despairingly for help; one and all declare that he is the only person to whom they can look for succour, that he is the conscience of the world.

The furrows on his brow deepen. "How can I help anyone?" he thinks. "I who do not know how to help my-

self. Day after day I stray from my course, trying to find a new reason for bearing this unfathomable life, while using big words about truth in order to humbug myself. How amazing that they should come to me crying: 'Leo Nikolaevich, teach us how to live!' All that I do is a lie, is inflated and pretentious. Really I must long since have been drained dry by squandering my energies upon thousands and thousands of persons, instead of collecting them within myself; because I talk and talk and talk, instead of holding my peace, and silently listening to the truth from within. But I must not disappoint the writers of these letters, I must answer them."

To one of the letters he attends longer than to the rest, reading it a second and a third time. It is from a student, who fiercely declares that Tolstoy "preaches water and drinks wine." It is time for him to leave his house, to hand over his property to the peasants, and to take up his pilgrimage on God's highways. "The man is right," muses Tolstoy. "He says what my own conscience tells me. How can I explain to him what I cannot explain to myself? How can I defend myself, since he accuses me in my own name?" Taking this letter with him, he moves to go to his study, for he wishes to answer it instantly. The secretary follows him to the door and reminds him that the "Times" correspondent is coming to dinner and has asked for an interview.

Tolstoy's face darkens. "These importunate interviewers! What do they want of me? Only to pry into my life. They cannot come to learn my opinions, for these are set forth in my writings, where anyone who knows how to read can study them." Still, in a moment of weakness, he gives way. "Well, well, I will see him; but only for half an hour." Hardly has he crossed the threshold of

his study, when he has pricks of conscience. "Why did I yield once more? A grey-headed man, nearing death, I have not yet been able to rid myself of vanity, and I deliver myself up to thèse chatterers. Always I am weak when they try to force themselves upon me. Shall I never learn to hide myself, to hold my tongue? God help me!"

At length he is alone in his study. A scythe, a rake, and an axe are hanging on the bare wall. The room is uncarpeted, and scantily furnished. Tolstoy's writing-table and chair are of plain deal, substantially but roughly made. The place looks like a cross between a monk's cell and the interior of a peasant's cottage. On the table lies the manuscript of a half-finished philosophical essay at which he had been working the day before. He reads it over, erasing, amending, and adding here and there, in a large and childish handwriting. Again and again his pen stops because his mind strays from the work. "I am too shallow, too impatient. How can I say anything about God when I am not yet clear in my own mind as to the idea of God, when I have no firm standing-ground of my own, and when my thoughts fluctuate from day to day? How can I write in plain terms that everyone will understand, since I am writing of God and of life, both incomprehensible? I have undertaken something which is beyond my powers. I was so sure of myself in the days when I wrote novels and tales describing life as God has made it, and not as I, a muddle-headed old seeker after truth, would like it to be. I am no saint, and I should not presume to teach others. I am only one to whom God has granted keener senses than to most, that he may see God's world more clearly. Perhaps I was a sincerer and

better man when I devoted myself to the service of art, than I am now when I revile art!"

Looking round almost furtively, as if afraid that someone may be watching him, he goes to a hiding-place and takes out the stories at which he is now secretly working —secretly, because he has publicly stigmatized art as "superfluous" and "sinful." There they are, *Hadji Murad*, and *The Forged Coupon;* he turns the pages, and reads here and there. His eyes beam. "Yes," he says to himself, "it is well written, it is good. God sent me into his world that I might describe it, not that I might try to guess his thoughts. How lovely art is; how pure, creation; how full of anguish, thought! I was happy in the old days, though the tears streamed down my face when I was describing the spring morning in *Family Happiness;* when Sofia Andreevna still came to my room in the evening, her eyes bright with love, to embrace me. When she was copying it, she had to stop and thank me; we were happy all the night through, our whole life was happy. But I cannot turn back now, I must not disappoint people; I must persevere in the path, since they expect me to help them in their need. I must not pause, for my days are numbered." He sighs, and reluctantly puts the stories back in their hiding-place. Then, in the mood of a hack writer, he sets to work once more at his essay, knitting his brows, and hanging his head so low that his white beard brushes the paper on which he writes.

Noon at last! He has written enough for to-day. Jumping up, he runs downstairs. The groom is at the door, holding Délire, his favourite mare. He swings himself into the saddle, and the figure which has been bowed over the writing-table straightens. He looks big, strong, lively,

much younger than in his study, as, with the easy seat of a Cossack, he canters off towards the forest. A sense of renewed life warms his old body voluptuously, and the blood tingles in his finger-tips and ears. When he enters the grove of saplings, he draws rein to note how the sticky buds are thrusting upwards into the spring sunshine, and how, when he gazes heavenward, the delicate tracery of the twigs is tinted with green. He guides his mount to the birches, where, keen of vision, he watches the ants crawling along the bark, some of them laden with spoil, and others collecting pollen. The patriarch lingers for many minutes, musing upon the infinitely little and the immeasurably great. How wonderful it is, how wonderful it has seemed to him for more than seventy years, this nature which is the mirror of God, a mirror whose reflections are ever new, ever animated; this nature that is so much wiser in its quietude than the turmoil of human thought. His mare whinnies, and paws the ground impatiently, rousing Tolstoy from his reverie. Thereupon he sets off at full gallop, to feel and to hear the breeze, to enjoy the wildness and the passion of the senses. He rides on and on, happy to be freed from thought; rides forward for twenty versts, until his mount's flanks are spotted with foam. Then he turns, and trots quietly homeward. His eyes shine, he is light-hearted, happy as when he had ridden along the same road in his boyhood's days.

When he nears the village, his face falls once more. He has been scanning the fields with the eyes of an expert. Here, in the middle of his own lands, is a region that is badly kept, neglected; the fences have been broken and probably the wood has been used for firing; the ground has not been ploughed. Angrily, he rides up to the cabin to demand information. A dirty, slatternly woman, bare-

footed, with tousled hair, comes submissively to the door, two or three half naked children clinging timidly to her ragged skirt, while farther back in the untidy hut a fourth lies bawling. Frowning at her, he asks why everything has been allowed to run to seed like this. The woman answers in a flood of disconnected words. For six weeks her husband has been in jail, for stealing wood. How could she look after things in his absence? Her man is strong and industrious, and was driven to his offence by hunger. His Worship knows how things are with them; bad harvest, high taxes, the difficulty of paying rent. The children, seeing that their mother is tearful, mingle their howls with her sniffs. Tolstoy, wishing to cut her eloquence short, gives her some money, and takes to flight. He is gloomy; his joy has vanished. "So this is what happens on my land—no, not mine, but the land I have made over to my wife and my children. Why do I always hide like a coward behind my wife's complicity, my wife's fault? The assignment of my property to her was nothing but a farce played to deceive the world. After I have myself fed full upon what has been extorted from the peasants, my family goes on sucking wealth out of these poor wretches. I know perfectly well that in the rebuilt house where I live, every brick is made out of the sweat of these serfs; is their flesh, their labour, turned into stone. What right had I to give my wife and children something which did not belong to me, the earth which the peasants till? Shame upon you, Leo Tolstoy, who in God's name preach righteousness day after day, while the wretchedness of your neighbours stares in at your windows!" Overcast with wrath and sorrow is his countenance, as he rides between the stone pillars of the gateway leading to My Lord's mansion. The liveried footman

and the groom rush forward, one to hold his horse, and the other to help him to alight. "My slaves," he says to himself grimly.

The table is set for dinner in the big dining-room, a blue-and-white service, and silver utensils. There is a babble of lively conversation among the company assembled: the countess, sons and daughters, the secretary, the resident physician, the French governess and the English, one or two neighbours, a revolutionary student who has been installed as tutor, and the "Times" correspondent. As the master of the house enters, a respectful silence falls upon the gathering. Tolstoy bows with old-fashioned courtesy to the visitors, and sits down at the table without saying a word. When his vegetarian fare is set before him (asparagus, an imported delicacy, cooked with the utmost care), his thoughts turn involuntarily to the ragged woman whom he had solaced with a coin or two. "I wish I could make them understand that I cannot and will not live like this, waited on hand and foot, a four-course dinner, silver dishes, and other superfluities, while these poor neighbours of mine lack the first necessaries. They know perfectly well that I want only one sacrifice from them, the abandonment of all this luxury, which is a shameful denial of the equality God wishes men to observe. But my wife, who ought to share my thoughts as well as my bed and my life, is at enmity with my thoughts. She is a millstone round my neck, a burden to my conscience, dragging me down into a life of falsehood. Long ago I should have cut the cords with which they have bound me. What more concern have I with them? They trouble my life, and I trouble theirs. I am unwanted here, a burden to myself and to them all."

He looks at his wife, Sofia Andreevna, and, though

not of set purpose, he looks upon her as his enemy. He notes how old and grey she is. Her brow is furrowed like his own, and her withered lips are set in a woeful expression. The old man's heart grows tender at the sight. "How unhappy she is! What a tragical figure, she whom I took into my life as a laughing, innocent maiden. Five-and-forty years ago, more than a generation, our life together began. She was a girl, whilst I was already worn by excesses; and she has borne me thirteen children. She helped me to produce my books, she suckled my children; what have I made of her? She is filled with despair, irritable to the verge of insanity; a woman so unhappy that her sleeping draughts have to be kept under lock and key lest she should end her life by an overdose. My sons, too, I know they dislike me; and then there are my daughters, whom I am robbing of the natural pleasures of youth; the secretaries, who make notes of everything I say, picking my words over like sparrows among horse droppings—they have balsam and incense ready in their boxes to preserve my mummy in a museum. Then there is the English puppy, waiting with his notebook to record what I am to tell him about our peasant land-tenure. This dinner table, this house, are an offence against God and truth; and I sit here in hell, warm and comfortable, instead of taking my own way. It would be better for me, it would be better for her, if I were dead. I have tarried far too long, and have not lived up to my principles."

The servant offers him another course, fruit with whipped cream, cooled on ice. With an angry gesture, he pushes the silver dish away. "Is there anything wrong with it?" asks Sofia Andreevna solicitously. "Is it too rich for you?"

He answers with bitter emphasis: "Yes, that is the trouble. It is too rich for me in more senses than one!"

His sons are mortified; his wife is hurt; the interviewer pricks up his ears, and makes a mental note of the aphorism.

At length the meal is over, and the company goes to the drawing-room. Tolstoy has an argument with the young revolutionist who, though respectful, does not hesitate to contradict the old man. The latter flares up, talks tempestuously, almost shouting, for he still becomes vehement in dispute, throwing all his energies into it, as he used to throw them into the chase and lawn-tennis. Suddenly he restrains himself, lowers his voice, and says: "Perhaps I am wrong. God sends His thoughts at random into men's minds, and which of us can tell whether he is uttering God's ideas or his own?" To turn the conversation, he says cheerfully: "Let's take a stroll in the park."

They set out, but there is an interruption. In front of the house, beneath the "tree of the poor," an ancient elm, are some common folk waiting to see Tolstoy. They have tramped many miles, to ask advice or beg for money. They are sunburned, weary, their shoes powdered with dust. When "His Worship the barin" appears, some prostrate themselves, Russian fashion. Briskly, he steps up to the group saying: "What do you want?"—"I want to ask, Excellency, . . ."—"I am not excellent," breaks in Tolstoy. "No one is excellent but God."—The peasant twists his cap uneasily between his fingers, but at length manages to stammer out his inquiry. Is it true that the land is now to belong to the peasants, and if so when is he to get his plot? Tolstoy answers impatiently, being always annoyed by anything that is difficult to explain.—A forest guard is the next questioner. He wants to know

all sorts of things about God. "Can you read?" asks Tolstoy. Being answered in the affirmative, he sends for a copy of *What Is to be Done*, and dismisses the inquirer with this book for answer.—The beggars are dealt with summarily, being given a copper apiece, for Tolstoy is growing impatient. Turning round, he notices that the journalist has snapped him in the act. His face darkens again. "So you have taken a picture of me, the good Tolstoy, always helpful, bestowing alms on the peasants! Anyone who could see into my heart would know that I have never been good, though I have tried to learn how to be good. I have never really cared about anything beyond my own self. I have never been helpful, and what I have given to the poor in the whole course of my life does not amount to half of what I have, as a young man, gambled away in a single night. It never occurred to me, though I knew Dostoeffsky was starving, to send him a couple of hundred roubles which would have freed him from his troubles for a month. Yet I allow people to make much of me, to glorify me as a man who shows true nobility, though I know all the time that I have scarcely begun to set my foot upon the right path."

He has been longing for his walk in the park, and, when it at length begins, he presses on so impatiently that the others find it hard to keep up with the nimble old man. As a matter of fact, he does not want any more conversation; only to enjoy the play of his muscles for a while, and then to watch his daughters at a game of tennis, to enjoy innocent bodily activity in himself and others. At the tennis court, he follows every movement with keen interest, laughing heartily at a clever service or a quick return. Then, with his senses refreshed, he takes another stroll. Now he goes back to his study, to read a little, to

rest a little; he tires more readily than of old, and his limbs are apt to feel heavy as the day goes on. Lying down on the sofa, closing his eyes, feeling old and worn, he thinks: "Better so! How I used to dread death, the spectre from which I wished to hide, trying to pretend that there was no such thing. That anxiety has departed, and I am glad to feel death near." A tired old man, plunged in reverie, alone with himself and his thoughts! At such a time, he is beautiful to look upon.

In the evening he rejoins the family circle, for his day's work is done. Goldenweiser, the pianist, offers to play something. "Yes, yes!" says Tolstoy, and leans on the piano, shading his eyes with his hands that no one may see how profoundly he is stirred by the music. This music which he has so often decried, how wonderfully it affects him, softening the asperities of life, making the soul gentle and good. "Why should I ever have reviled art? Where else can we find solace? Thinking confuses us, science bewilders us; where else can we feel God's presence so plainly as in the creations of the artist? Beethoven and Chopin, you are my brothers. I feel that your eyes are resting on me, and that the heart of all mankind is beating within my breast. Forgive me, brothers, for my invectives!" The piece ends with a mighty chord; there is a burst of applause, in which Tolstoy joins after momentary hesitation. The music has cured his restlessness, and he can now join cheerfully in the conversation. At length, after all the ups and downs of the day, tranquillity reigns.

Before going to bed, he returns to his study. In accordance with his usual practice, he must hold an assize over himself, critical concerning every hour of this day as concerning every hour of his life. He opens the

diary, and the eye of conscience stares at him from the blank pages on which he is to write. He thinks of the peasants, of the poverty for which he holds himself responsible, of the way he has ridden to and fro without giving any help beyond the bestowal of a few pitiful coins. He was impatient with the beggars; he harboured unkind feelings towards his wife. All these offences are now recorded in his diary, the book of self-accusation, and, summing up, he writes: "Slothful once more, palsied in soul. Have not done enough good! Even now I cannot learn the hardest thing of all, to love the people round about me, rather than humanity at large. Help me, God, help me!"

He writes the date of the following day, and the initials for the words "If I live." Another day has been lived through to the end. With bowed back, the old man goes into his bedroom, takes off his blouse and his heavy boots, flings himself on his bed, and, as always before going to sleep, meditates on death. For a time his thoughts continue to flutter vividly, like brightly coloured butterflies; gradually the colours fade, as in the forest when night is falling. The pleasing confusion that heralds sleep takes possession of his mind. . . .

He comes to himself with a start. Was not that a footfall in the neighbouring room? Yes, furtive steps! Noiselessly he gets out of bed, and looks through the keyhole into the study. There is a light in the room. Someone is rummaging his desk, turning over the pages of his diary, prying into the recesses of his conscience—Sofia Andreevna, his wife. She wants to learn his intimate secrets, will not even allow him the privacy of being alone with God. Everywhere, in his house, in his life, in his soul, he is exposed to the shafts of greed and curiosity.

Tremulous with anger, he is about to fling open the door and berate the spy, the traitor, his wife. But he masters his rage: "Perhaps this test has been laid upon me." He creeps back to bed—to lie awake for hours, Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, the greatest, the most gifted man of his time, betrayed in his own house, tortured by doubts, in an agony of loneliness.

RESOLVE AND TRANSFIGURATION

One who wishes to believe in immortality, must lead an immortal life here on earth.

DIARY, MARCH 6, 1896

Leo Tolstoy was seventy-two years old when he crossed the threshold of the new century. Erect in mind, and yet already become a quasi-legendary figure, was the heroical old man as he moved towards the completion of his career. The aged pilgrim's countenance above the snow-white beard looked gentler than of yore, the skin yellowing, translucent as parchment, and (like a venerable parchment) profusely wrinkled, inscribed with numberless runes. A captivating and indulgent smile often fluttered over his lips; rarely were his bushy brows knitted in anger; the mood of a man temperamentally prone to wrath had mellowed with time. "How kindly and considerate he has become," said his brother, who had known him all these years as ever ready to flare up, as untamable. It was true. The intensity of his passions was abating. Weary of the unending wrestle, weary of self-torment, his spirit was becoming tranquil, and would often allow itself rest. That was why his face looked peaceful and good-natured in the last rays of the setting sun. In this transfigured shape the face of Tolstoy comes down to posterity as a universal heritage. It is the serious and calm visage of the man as he was in extreme old age that count-

less generations will cherish as the likeness of Tolstoy.

Old age, which in general plays havoc with the image of a hero, gives majesty in this instance. Harshness has been transformed into sùblimity, passion transmuted into gentleness, rough intolerance subtilized into sympathetic understanding. In actual fact, the veteran fighter wants nothing but peace, "peace with God and man," peace even with his worst enemy—death. The panicky dread, the animal terror of dying has happily become a thing of the past, and the inevitable is faced with composure. "I remind myself that to-morrow I may not be alive, trying day by day to familiarize myself with the thought, and growing accustomed to it." Now note the wonder! As soon as the terror of death has been allayed, the author's creative faculty takes on a new lease of life. Just as Goethe in the evening of his days came back from the distraction of scientific work to his "main business," so Tolstoy the preacher and moralist returns in his eighth decade to the art which he had renounced and reviled. In the twentieth century the greatest imaginative writer of the nineteenth rose again in the flesh. Fearlessly restringing his mighty bow, he recalls an experience of his Cossack days, and forges it into the epic tale *Hadji Murad*, resounding with the clash of arms, a heroic legend, told as simply and as grandly as in his best earlier manner. The tragedy of the *Living Corpse*, the masterly tales *After the Ball* and *Kornei Vasilieff*, and a number of short stories, were the splendid results of his return to art, of his emancipation from the moralist's introspective torment. No reader of these works would ever guess them to have been penned by the tired hand of a very old man. Their prose has a free and unconstrained flow, like that of a mighty river which runs for all eternity; and the

author's gaze, undimmed by senility, pierces to the heart of man's destiny. The judge has laid aside his robes to become the observer and recorder once again. Aware, at length, that the divine purposes are inscrutable, he ceases to inquire into them, and is content to describe what happens. Tolstoy has grown kindly, not tired. A primitive peasant, he will go on tilling the inexhaustible soil of his thoughts, will continue to elaborate these thoughts in his diary, until the pen drops from his dying hand.

This indefatigable worker cannot rest, since he regards it as his destiny to continue the struggle to the end. One sacred piece of work still awaits completion. It does not bear mainly on life; it concerns his own approaching death. The last endeavours of this mighty sculptor are to be devoted to the shaping of that death in such a fashion that it shall be worthy, shall be exemplary. At none of his works of art did he toil so long and so strenuously, as at this problem of how to die fitly; to no other did he devote so much anxious thought. A true artist, always trying to improve his work, he was especially eager that the last, the most universally human of them all, should come as near as possible to perfection.

The struggle for a worthy death is the decisive battle in the seventy years' war for truth; and of all his battles, it is the one which demands from him the greatest sacrifices, for it has to be fought against his own household. A crowning deed has still to be done, a deed from which he has shrunk for reasons that are no longer obscure to us. He must finally, irrevocably, rid himself of his property. Like Kutusoff in *War and Peace*, who would fain avoid a decisive battle, and hopes to get the better

of his formidable antagonist by the device of a strategic retreat, Tolstoy has again and again put off the ultimate disposal of his possessions, and has tried to appease his conscience by taking refuge in the "wisdom of inaction." His every attempt to renounce the posthumous rights in his literary works has been frustrated by the fierce opposition of his family, for he is too weak (or too humane) to ride roughshod over their wishes. Year after year he has contented himself with personally refusing to touch the money his writings earn, or to make any use of his income. But, as he says in self-condemnation, he did this only because he had rejected ownership on principle, and would be open to the charge of inconsistency had he been careful to maintain his own proprietary rights. "I was animated by false shame." Again and again, after attempts each of which is a domestic tragedy, he postpones for an indefinite period a clear and binding decision upon this matter.

But in 1908, when his attainment of the age of eighty is to be celebrated by the issue of a complete edition of his works, the declared enemy of property is forced to take action. Henceforward Yasnaya Polyana, the shrine of pilgrimage, the place regarded with veneration by millions in the Old World and the New, is, behind closed doors, the theatre of a quarrel between Tolstoy and his nearest relatives. This dispute is all the more harsh and hateful because it is about a despicable matter, about money; and it is one whose violence is but inadequately disclosed even by the shrill outcries in the diary. "How hard it is to shake oneself free from this filthy, sinful property," groans Tolstoy on July 25, 1908. Half the members of his family are clinging desperately to dross, fighting for it tooth and nail. The scenes that take place

are fit for the pages of a sensational novel. Drawers are broken open; cupboards are rifled; eavesdroppers listen to private conversations; efforts are made to put the old man's affairs in commission. These things alternate with tragical moments; with attempts at suicide on the part of Sofia Andreevna, and with Tolstoy's threats that he will flee from the "hell of Yasnaya Polyana." But the extremity of torment helps to steel his will; and at length, a few months before his death, resolved that this death shall be a worthy one, determined to put an end to all ambiguity, he decides to draw up a will which shall make all mankind the heir of his spiritual property. One last lie is needed for the achievement of this ultimate truth. Convinced that he is spied upon at home, he goes as if upon an ordinary ride to the neighbouring forest of Grumont, and there, upon a tree-stump, in the presence of three witnesses and some impatient horses, he signs the document that is to make his wishes valid after his death.

Now he has broken his fetters, and he believes that he has decided the issue. But the hardest and most important step has still to be taken. Nothing can be kept secret in this abode of chatter, where suspicion lurks in every corner. Soon his wife and the others guess that Tolstoy has clandestinely made a will. They use false keys to open boxes and cupboards, pry into the diary to see if they can find mention of a significant visit; and again the countess threatens suicide, this time unless the detested "confederate" Cherkoff ceases to visit the house. Tolstoy realizes that here, amid passion and greed, in an atmosphere of hatred and unrest, he cannot achieve what is to be his last work of art, a worthy death. He is overwhelmed with anxiety lest they should succeed in depriv-

ing him of "those precious minutes which are perhaps the finest of all." From the depths of his being, there surges up the thought which has never been absent from his mind during all these years, the thought that, to attain the true end of life, he must be willing, for holiness' sake, to leave wife and children and worldly possessions. Twice before, he had fled from home. The first time had been in 1884, when strength had failed him in the act, and he had constrained himself to return to his wife, then in the throes of childbirth. That night, Aleksandra had been born, the daughter who now rallied to her father's side, and was ready to help him on his chosen path. In 1897, thirteen years later, he had made another attempt, leaving for his wife the imperishable letter in which he set forth the reasons of conscience which had driven him to flight: "I resolved on flight, first of all because, as I grow older, I find my present life more and more burdensome, and I long ever more earnestly for solitude; and secondly because, now that the children are grown up, my presence in the house is no longer necessary. . . . The main thing is this. Just as the Indians withdraw into the jungle when they attain the age of sixty, so every religiously minded man feels, when he grows old, a longing to devote his last years to God, instead of wasting them on amusement, sport, chatter, and lawn-tennis. So do I, now that I am approaching seventy, feel a yearning for rest and solitude, that I may live at peace with my own conscience, or, if that be unattainable, that I may at least put an end to the glaring disharmony between my life and my faith."

This time, too, he had returned home, the familiar ties of kindliness being too strong for him. He was not equal to the demand he made on himself, the call was

not yet loud enough. Now, thirteen years after the second flight, twice thirteen after the first, the impulse had become irresistible, the inexplicable lure of distance had grown too strong to be withstood. In July, 1910, he wrote in his diary: "I have no choice but to flee, and I say to myself, 'Now the time is come to show your Christianity!' C'est le moment ou jamais. No one needs me here. Help me, God; instruct me; I want only to do thy will, not mine. I write these words and ask myself, 'Is it really true?' Am I not still posturing before God? Help! Help! Help!" Even now he hesitates. Anxiety regarding the fate of the others holds him back. He is alarmed lest the wish to flee should be sinful, after all. Scrutinizing his own soul, he asks himself whether there may not come a summons from within, an imperious order from above, to decide matters for him when his will is still hesitant. On his knees, as it were, praying before the inscrutable Wisdom in whose guidance he believes, he confides his anxieties and distresses to his diary.

At length, when the hour has come, an inner voice speaks to him the ancient commandment: "Rise up, take thy staff and thy cloak, and set forth upon thy pilgrimage!"

THE FLIGHT TO GOD

Man must be alone, if he is to draw near to God.

DIARY

October 28, 1910, towards six o'clock in the morning; under the trees it is still pitch-dark, so that the figures of three or four persons moving stealthily close to the manor house of Yasnaya Polyana are barely visible. One can just hear the clink of keys, the rattle of wards, but doors are being opened as noiselessly as possible, as if by thieves. The coachman, who is putting the horses to, is no less careful to avoid making a clatter. In two of the rooms of the house, shadows move to and fro, carrying dark lanterns, picking up parcels, opening and shutting drawers, all with the utmost precaution. They glide out through the doors, and speak only in whispers as they tumble over roots in the pleasance. Then, avoiding the front of the house, the carriage drives away through a postern gate.

What is afoot? Have burglars been breaking in? Have the tsar's police, at long last, made a night raid upon the suspect's dwelling? No, all that has happened is that Leo Tolstoy has been escaping from the prison of his every-day life. The call has come to him, irresistible, decisive—an unmistakable sign. Once more he has detected his wife at dead of night, rummaging among his papers, and on the instant his determination has become fixed to leave the woman "who has abandoned me in the spirit," to flee

away, anywhere, to God, to himself, to the death which has been allotted him. Slipping a cloak over his working blouse, wearing a rough cap and rubber overshoes, he departs, taking no belongings with him beyond what he needs to commit his thoughts to paper—diary and pen. At the station, he scribbles a line to his wife, and sends it back by the coachman: "I have done what men of my age are apt to do, have left this worldly life, that I may pass my last days in tranquillity and seclusion." Then, with one companion, Dushan the friend and physician, he takes his seat in a third-class compartment, Leo Tolstoy, running away to God.

But he no longer calls himself Leo Tolstoy. Just as Charles V, the lord of two worlds, voluntarily renounced the insignia of power that he might bury himself in the cloister at Yuste in Estremadura, so Tolstoy, ridding himself of money, house, and fame, wants to rid himself also of the well-known name. He calls himself T. Nikolaeff, the new name of a man who wants to enter upon a new life and to find the way to a worthy death. All ties have been snapped now, he can pursue his pilgrimage along unfamiliar roads, become a faithful servant of the true word. In the monastery of Shamardino he says farewell to his sister the abbess; two old folk, surrounded by gentle monks. Here, a few days later, he is joined by the daughter who was born in the night following his first flight from home, twenty-six years earlier. But he cannot tarry to enjoy the quiet of Shamardino, for he dreads being followed hither, and dragged back into the false existence of his home. On October 31st, having once more felt the touch of an unseen finger, he arouses his daughter Aleksandra at four in the morning, and resumes his flight. Where is he going? Anywhere! Bul-

garia, the Caucasus, no matter where, so long as it is to some place where his name is unknown, where he can enjoy the luxury of solitude, can find himself—and God.

Fame, however, the dread familiar of his life, the tormentor and tempter, will not abandon its prey so readily. The world will not allow Tolstoy to follow his own bent, to obey unchallenged the promptings of his elemental will. As soon as the hunted man is in the train once more, as inconspicuous as possible with his cap drawn well down over his eyes, a fellow passenger recognizes the famous author, and passes on the news. Men and women throng the corridor, eager to catch a glimpse of him. Many of them have newspapers, in which column after column contains accounts of the costly beast which has escaped from its cage. He has been betrayed, is surrounded; for the last time, fame bars Tolstoy's road towards perfectionment. The telegraph wires beside the train that roars on its way are humming with messages about the distinguished passenger; every station is in touch with the police; the railway officials have been mobilized; the family at Yasnaya Polyana is ordering a special train to bring him home; from Moscow, from St. Petersburg, from Nijni Novgorod, from all quarters of the compass, reporters are tracking their quarry. The Holy Synod is sending a priest to catch the penitent. Now a stranger boards the train, and walks past the compartment several times, each time in a new disguise—a detective. No, no, fame will not let the victim escape. Leo Tolstoy must not be left alone with himself. People will not admit that he belongs to himself, and is entitled to seek salvation in his own way.

He has already been surrounded by his enemies, and there is no cover, not a thicket in which he can hide. When

the train reaches the frontier, an official will, with the utmost politeness, inform him that he is not allowed to leave Russia. Wherever he may pause, his fame will be awaiting him, the clamour of innumerable tongues. He is in the toils, and cannot escape. As he turns these thoughts over in his mind, he becomes aware that there is something amiss with him physically, that he feels very ill.

Aleksandra notices that her father is shivering, that he is leaning wearily against the hard wooden back of the seat. The cold stage is followed by a hot one, and soon he is dripping with sweat. A kindly access of fever has come to his rescue. Death is making ready to hide him from his pursuers.

When the train stops at the little wayside station of Astapovo, Tolstoy is obviously too ill to go farther on his journey. There is no hospitable mansion near at hand, no hotel, not even the poorest of inns. Nothing, but the one-storied station-building, a wooden structure containing two rooms, the public waiting-room and the station-master's private quarters. Diffidently, the official offers the use of the latter. Tolstoy is led within, and sees the realization of his dream. A poor little room, low-ceiled, dimly lighted by a kerosene lamp, a small iron bedstead —the antipodes of the luxuries and conveniences from which he has fled. He will pass his last hours in surroundings that conform to his most ardent desires; his death will be a worthy one, purified from dross, symbolical.

In a few days the great edifice of this death has been upbuilded, a sublime exemplification of his teaching, fundamentally simple, imperturbable, on foundations which nothing can sap. No matter that just outside the door fame lies in wait for him, panting and licking her lips; no matter that hot upon his trail come reporters, sen-

sation-mongers, spies, detectives, policemen, priests sent by the Holy Synod, army officers dispatched by the tsar; they may not enter, their shameless curiosity is barred away from the dying man, who is left to the solitude which he has craved. His daughter tends him; she, Dushan the physician, and one other friend: their quiet affection surrounds his deathbed with an atmosphere of peace. On the bedside table lies the diary, the speaking-tube through which he converses with God, but his hands are now too weak to hold a pencil. He dictates to his daughter. Though his breathing is difficult, and though his voice falters at times, he communicates his last thoughts, saying that God is "that infinite all, of which man feels himself to be a finite part, the revelation of God in matter, time, and space"; and he declares that only through love can earthly beings enter into communion one with another. Two days before his death, he is still able to collect his forces in the attempt to grasp the essence of truth, to attain the unattainable; for only by slow degrees are the radiations of this tireless brain dimmed at the oncoming of death.

Outside is the throng of the curious; he is no longer aware of their presence. Sofia Andreevna is there, humbled and penitent, eager to catch a glimpse of him through the window, but his mind is otherwise occupied than with the woman who has been his companion for eight-and-forty years. More and more hazy grow the things of this world to the most clear-sighted of men; sluggish and yet more sluggish is the current of his blood. In the night of November 4th, rousing himself once more, he says with a groan: "But the peasants—how do peasants die?" This titanic life is still combating the titan, death. Not until November 7th does the life of the man who will

live for ever come to an end. The white head sinks into the pillow, and the light dies out of the eyes that have seen more clearly than any others. Now at length does the indefatigable seeker know the true meaning of life.

ENVOY

The man is dead, but his relationship to the world continues to influence his fellows, not only as when he was alive but far more powerfully. That influence is magnified by his reasonability and by his love, and, like all that is alive, it goes on growing for ever and ever.

FROM A LETTER

MAXIM GORKY once called Tolstoy "a humankindly man," and the phrase is an apt one. Tolstoy is our human brother, moulded out of the same friable clay and affected with the same earthly inadequacies, though more plainly aware of them than the rest of us, more painfully afflicted by them. Leo Tolstoy was not a man of loftier type than others of his generation, did not differ from them in kind. He was only more human than most, more intensive, keener sighted, more perfectly awake, more passionate—like an artist's proof, a first and wonderfully sharp impression from the unseen original kept in the master-craftsman's workshop.

To depict this archetypal man, whose image (often recognizably enough) is hidden away within us all, to disclose his figure as clearly as possible and as completely as possible amid the complexities of our world; this was Tolstoy's primary aim as a writer, an aim that could never be fully attained, and one that was all the more heroic for that. He was able to seek out and describe Everyman thanks to the unrivalled veracity of his senses;

he sought and questioned Everyman in the hidden recesses of his own consciousness, probing into depths which can be reached only through self-inflicted wounds. With ferocious zeal, with pitiless severity, this moral genius explored his own soul, in the endeavour to free the archetypal man from earthly incrustations, and to show us our own selves ennobled to become true images of God and models of what we must endeavour to be. Never resting, never satisfied, never debasing his art to formalism, he devoted his whole life to an attempt to achieve self-perfectionment through self-portraiture. Not since Goethe has any imaginative writer been so successful in thus revealing both himself and the archetypal man.

Only to outward seeming has Leo Tolstoy passed away. He is still at work among us. Many of us have looked into his piercing eyes, have felt the brotherly clasp of his hand; and yet already he has become a legendary figure, and his struggle against himself is an example to our generation.

For unceasingly we strive, in the flux of time, to find anchorage upon certain emblematic and typical figures, as symbols of our undying purpose; we fix our eyes on the greatest, as witnesses to our own latent powers. Thus Tolstoy the indefatigable worker is the embodiment of Everyman's will, and Tolstoy the incomparably sincere is the embodiment of Everyman's search after knowledge and truth.

The seeking mind can only recognize the limits and laws of its own functioning through a study of the truths that are quickening within itself. It is only through the self-portraiture of great artists that the genius of mankind becomes comprehensible to earthbound mortals.

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